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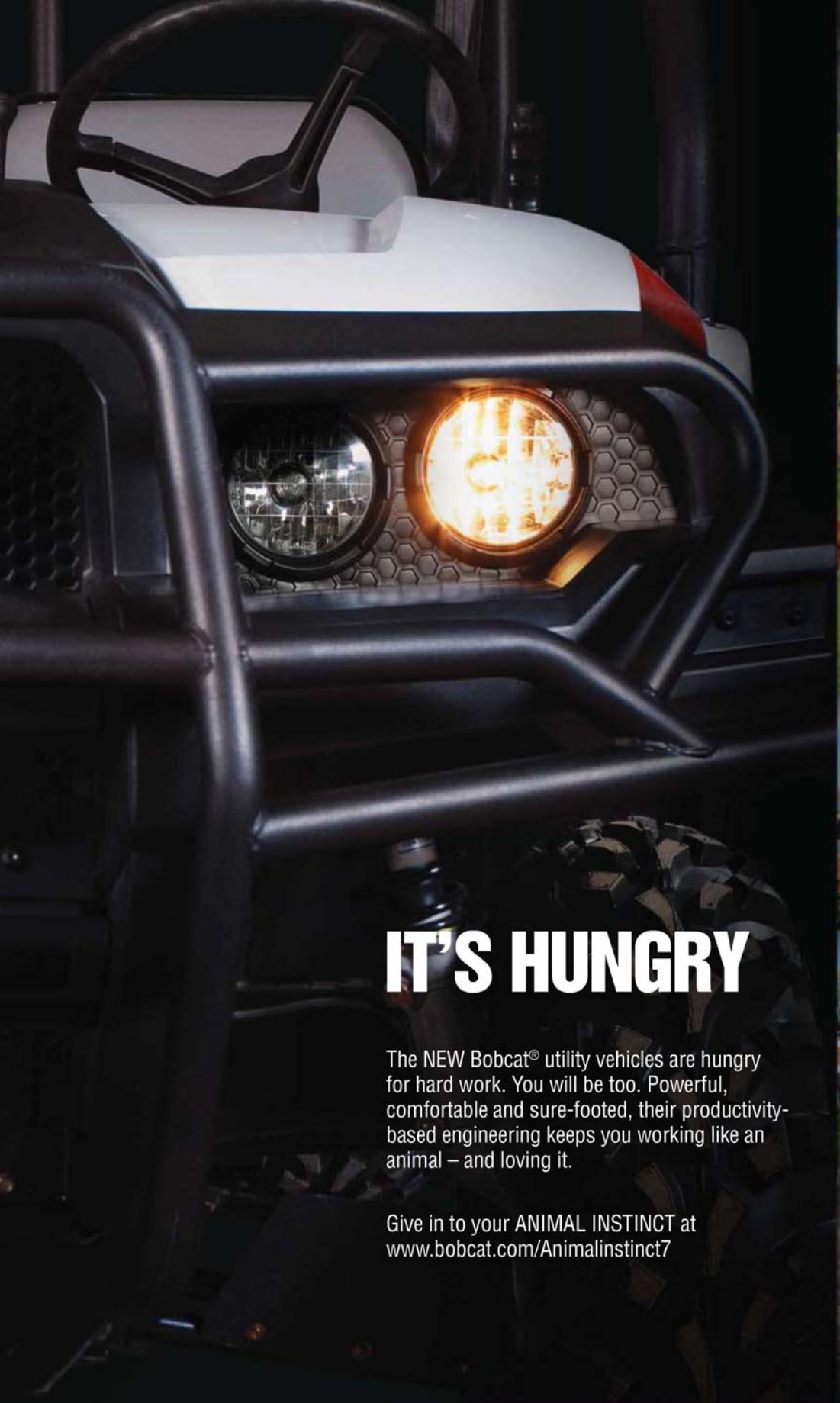

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Circle #3; see card pg 65

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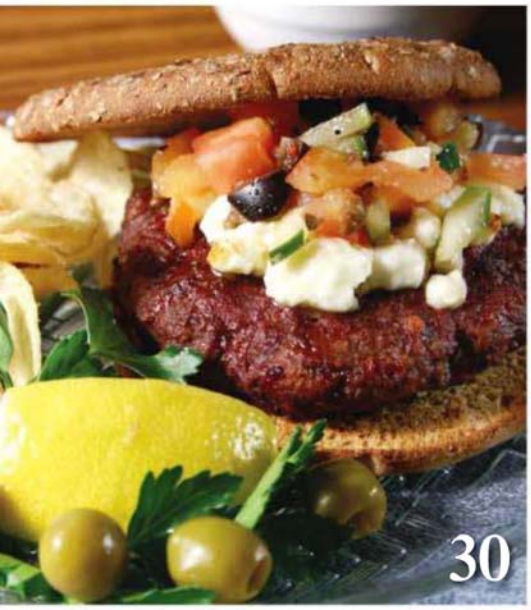

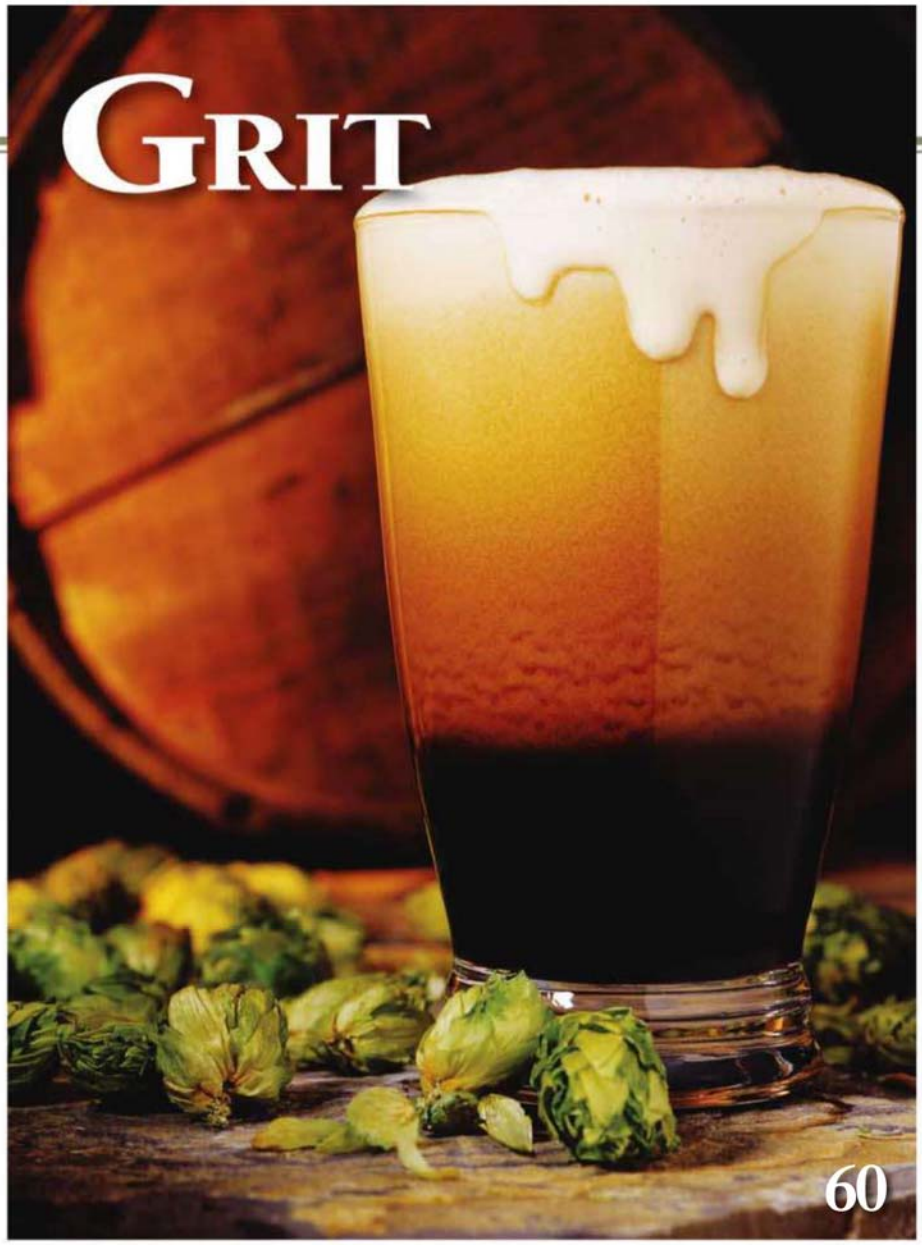

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Photo: Lori Dunn
Cover Design: Matthew Stallbaumer

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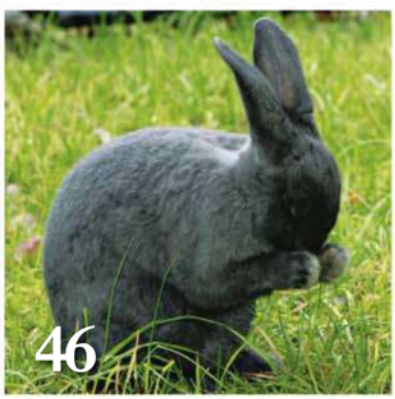

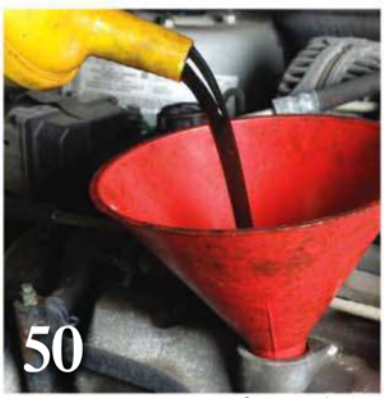

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Circle #1; see card pg 65

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RELATED CONTENT

Look for this symbol throughout the issue and find the related articles at *www.Grit.com/related*.

1. **Canning Made Easy**
   Tips for preserving the harvest.
2. **More Burger Recipes**
   Find a few more patties great for grillin'.
3. **Build a Cold Frame**
   Extend your growing season into fall.

GRIT Magazine Do you have any experiments in your garden this year?

Sharon Runnels A trellis made out of cattle panels with cukes, scarlet runner beans and yard long beans. All on drip irrigation.

Find us at *www.Facebook.com/GritMagazine*

FEATURED COMMENT

"When we feel like working in our garden is a chore, we can remember how much we loved playing in the dirt and with bugs as a child."

– PEGGY MORRIS via Facebook, on "Through the Eyes of a Child" in Midwest Living

S.M.R. Saia

READER BLOGS

Grit is proud to offer blogs written by our readers from across North America.

Sprouts: Stories from a Young Farmer

by Alison Spaude-Filipczak

"I imagined walking through the dewy fields at sunrise admiring the rapid growth of plants in their infancy. I imagined spending afternoons between rows of garlic and onions, hoe in my hand and straw hat on my head. I imagined loosening the ground with a garden fork and excitedly pulling carrots from the rich earth." – From "Farm School Weeks Four and Five," April 22, 2010

Alison takes part in the Greenbank Farmer Training Program on Whidbey Island, Washington.

Life on a Southern Farm

by Georgia Farm Woman Pam

"I looked at the waterwheel, and it was like looking at home. Something that you know is supposed to be there. Now I know why after 33 years of marriage, I still get talked into these projects. I felt that old familiar feeling of accomplishment. Proud of my husband. Proud of me. We did it ourselves. By ourselves. For ourselves. And it felt good." – From "The Waterwheel Finds a Home," February 11, 2010

Pam and her husband live a back-to-basics, debt-free, hardworking life on 100 acres in rural Georgia, where they raise cattle, goats and poultry.

WWW.GRIT.COM **If you would like to be a Grit blogger, e-mail us at *editor@Grit.com*.**

Grit eNews

Let us sort through rural lifestyles news and deliver the best to your inbox, free. Our weekly newsletter highlights news, blogs and articles.

Saddle Up For Summer

With game pieces on top-selling equine products, Manna Pro offers one horse owner the chance to win a saddle (*www.Grit.com/saddle*).

Grit gear Sweepstakes

Win the Brinkmann Smoke 'N Grill, courtesy of All Seasons Homestead Helpers. This smoker-grill combo holds up to 50 pounds of meat. To enter, visit *www.Grit.com/grit-gear*. A winner will be selected August 12.

courtesy All Seasons Homestead Helpers

Safe Canning

IN OUR MAY/JUNE ISSUE, we printed a recipe for home-canned salsa that included using starch as a thickener. Shortly after that issue hit the newsstand, I received a helpful letter noting that the USDA no longer approves of canning salsas that use starch as a thickener because its presence could lead to uneven heating of the jars in the water bath, and since salsa contains non-acidic ingredients such as onions and peppers, the threat of botulism is real. Yikes!

A variety of homemade preserves grace the picnic table; fresh chili peppers spice up homemade salsa.

Photos: iStockphoto.com/top, Elena Ray; above, James Pauls

I chewed on this information, while considering that my Ball Blue Book was more than a decade old and the recipe we published (and its untold variations) has been in use for scores of years by mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers and even a few of their male counterparts

So, I investigated the National Center for Home Food Preservation (NCHFP) website (*www.UGA.edu/nchfp*) to see what I might learn about safe canning in the modern world.

Upon its inception in 2000, the NCHFP immediately conducted a national survey and concluded that "a high percentage of home food processors are using practices that put them at high risk for foodborne illness and economic losses due to food spoilage," and set about the task of developing scientifically approved and tested recipes and canning protocols that would ensure the safety of home-canned foods.

Further research into home-canning safety led me to the Pick Your Own website's botulism page (*www.PickYourOwn.org/botulism.htm*) where I learned, among many other useful facts, that there are about 145 botulism cases a year in the United States – approximately 15 percent (roughly 22) of those are foodborne poisonings (not necessarily from home-canned food). This might be why botulism wasn't on my radar screen when a reader offered that venerable old salsa recipe – I can't recall the last time the national news picked up on botulism poisoning from home-canned foods.

Pick Your Own also discourages folks from using any personal recipes for canning because "the establishment of a correct, safe process requires laboratory research by trained scientists." Bummer, eh? Do we just throw out all that tried, but not scientifically true, food knowledge?

I probably won't can much from the garden this year, as freezing preserves more flavor and nutrients and is less trouble, but I will check the NCHFP and Pick Your Own websites for recipes and recommendations on canning those crops that just beg to be stored in glass jars on the pantry shelf. I don't plan to throw away every old-time recipe for home canning that I've used over the years; however, I will be more diligent with following tested recipes and processing protocols.

Whether you're canning your first tomato crop or freezing creamed corn, we'd love to know what you're up to this season. We'd especially like to know how you plan to provide safe food for your family this winter. If you keep a country journal and would like to share it through a blog at *www.Grit.com*, just let me know (*hwill@Grit.com*).

See you in September.

Hank

courtesy Karen Keb

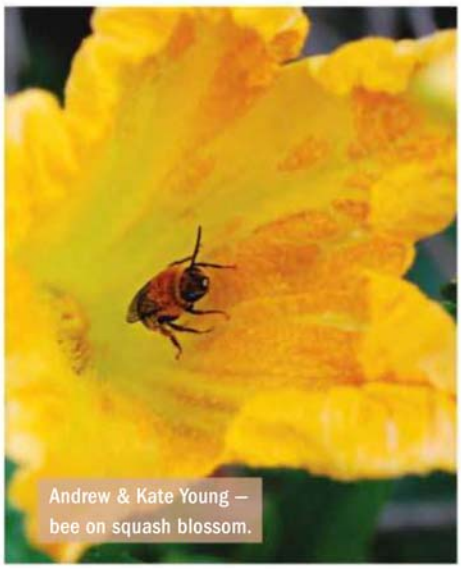
Honeybee feeding – Shannon Middlebrook.

Robert Allen Hill – bumblebee on coneflower.

Ted Rose – honeybee making use of a thistle.

Busy Bees

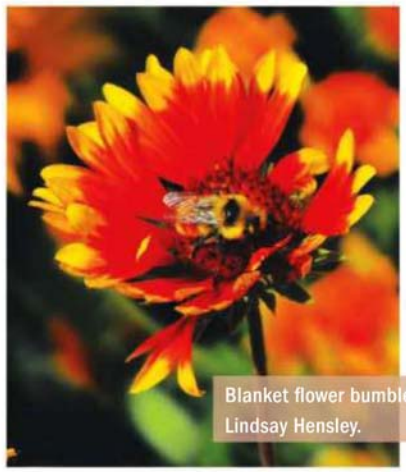
Share your visual perspective with GRIT's online community on GRIT See You, our free photo-sharing website. We chose several images you see here from there, and some are visible in the Contribute section of the GRIT website. Post your best shots, and we just might select one of your photos for a future issue of the magazine. To admire fellow readers' photos and to showcase Your View, visit *CU.Grit.com*.



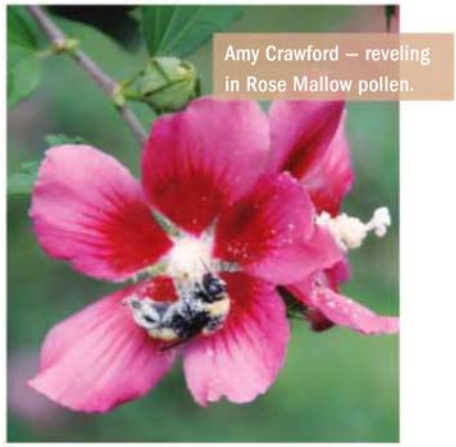
Andrew & Kate Young – bee on squash blossom.

Lisa Westfall – bumblebee among perennials.

Lori Dunn – bumblebee makes a lilac landing.



Blanket flower bumbler – Lindsay Hensley.



Amy Crawford – reveling in Rose Mallow pollen.

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GRIT

VOLUME 128, ISSUE 4

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Good Things to Know

from the Farmers' Almanac®

SUMMER WEATHER OUTLOOK

After a wacky, wild winter and a soggy spring, things will finally begin to warm up as summer swings into full gear. Most areas of the United States and Canada can expect hotter-than-normal temperatures during July and August. Those who complained about last summer's damp, cool weather may enjoy the scorching heat the Farmers' Almanac predicts for the coming summer. Only the Pacific Northwest can expect to see near-normal temperatures this year. Elsewhere, be sure to stock up on sunscreen. Look for thunderstorms to strike most regions over the Fourth of July holiday weekend, with the threat of tornadoes over the Plains states.

For the rest of the summer, look for an average amount of rainfall on the East Coast and Pacific Northwest, with wetter-than-normal conditions in the Midwest and South Central states, especially Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma and parts of New Mexico. California and Nevada will have an exceptionally dry summer, which could mean an increased threat of wildfires.

For a more detailed, long-range forecast, visit ***www.FarmersAlmanac.com***.

Lightning Facts:
JULY IS THE PEAK MONTH IN THE UNITED STATES FOR BOTH LIGHTNING STORMS AND LIGHTNING-RELATED FATALITIES.

Stockphoto.com/Brian Jackson

BEST DAYS

For centuries, people have believed that it's best to conduct tasks when the moon is most favorable. The dates below are based on many formulas that take into consideration the moon's place in the zodiac, as well as the phase of the moon. Though the results are not guaranteed, many people swear they get better results when using the moon's phase as a guide. Be sure to also take your local climate into consideration.

FISHING

JULY: 2-4, 27-31
AUGUST: 23-27

GARDEN BY THE MOON

JULY:
ABOVEGROUND CROPS – 11, 12, 17-21, 24
ROOT CROPS – 2-4, 7, 8, 25, 26, 29-31
SEEDBEDS – 11, 12, 19-21
FLOWERS – 11, 12, 17, 18

AUGUST:
ABOVEGROUND CROPS – 14-17, 21, 22
ROOT CROPS – 3, 4, 7, 8, 26, 27, 30, 31
SEEDBEDS – 7, 8, 16, 17
FLOWERS – 7, 8, 14, 15

iStockphoto.com/Iztok Noc

WHAT ARE 'DOG DAYS'?

The phrase "dog days of summer" describes the period of time between July 3 and August 11. Though some people attribute the origin of the phrase to the fact that the hot days cause dogs to go crazy, the name is actually a reference to the fact that, during this time, the Sun occupies the same region of the sky as Sirius, the "Dog Star." It was once believed that the star somehow conspired with the Sun to make the days hotter.

BEAT THE HEAT:

A/C OR WINDOWS?

Running the air conditioner in your car can decrease fuel efficiency by about 10 percent, but rolling down the windows can actually be worse. Driving with the windows open causes wind resistance that, at speeds of 55 miles per hour or greater, can reduce your fuel efficiency by up to 20 percent. For the best fuel efficiency, roll down your windows at slower speeds, and opt for the A/C once you hit the highway, preferably on the lowest comfortable setting.

USE YOUR CURTAINS TO KEEP YOUR COOL

Curtains are good for more than just privacy. They can also help you regulate the temperature inside your home. In the summertime, close your curtains or blinds during the day to keep the sunlight out, and open them at night to let out the heat. In the winter, do the opposite.

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Intensified Planting

Just like any other gardener, I am always trying something different and trying to increase production. I have been tilling a 5-foot-wide bed and planting seeds in the center of it with a Cole planter. This has worked nicely, but when the national economic situation took a turn for the worse, I began thinking about growing more in order to provide fresh vegetables for my married children and their families, and also to provide for folks in need.

I thought about buying another planter and using both side by side, thus doubling production, but that would have cost too much. Several years ago, I read an article concerning close-planting of corn, and that article stuck in my mind. I immediately began designing another 3-point attachment for the Cole planter. After several discouraging attempts, it suddenly dawned on me to have the local welding shop weld a planter beside the original 3-point planter. The local welder was successful, although he did not get two of the holes spaced correctly. It works anyway because two bolts hold it nicely. Being off-center enables me to run down the bed in opposite directions, thus creating two parallel rows about 10 inches apart. Now I'm able to plant corn, beans, peas and beets – double production – minimizing cultivation and decreasing evaporation.

The tractor-mounted Cole planter plants two rows spaced 10 inches apart when following the same path in opposite directions.

Photos: courtesy Stanley Jobe

STANLEY M. JOBE
Roans Prairie, Texas

In a time when making the most out of what we already have is so important, you've devised an easy, practical tactic, Stanley. Our other readers will benefit from knowing your story. Thank you. – Editors

No Need to Buy One

Thank you so much for including the article on rain barrels in your magazine ("A Better Way to Harvest Rainwater," March/April, Page 74).

I can't afford to buy one (maybe I will be lucky and win yours), but I had plans for several in my garden. I asked for help at one of the big box stores, but really didn't get any. They *sell* rain barrels, as they pointed out to me. That company's was $80.

I can buy big, food-grade, 55-gallon and larger cans for $10 or less and just a few more dollars for the attachments.

Thanks to you, I now have the plans to put some together.

Also, you noted that it would not work well with soaker hoses, which I had also intended using. I didn't realize they needed any pressure. But there are lots of old hoses around here that can be converted per the instructions in the article.

TRUDY EAGAN
via e-mail

Trudy, we wish all of our readers could win the Grit Gear Sweepstakes. Keep trying, there will be plenty more opportunities! (See Page 31.) – Editors

Loving Olive Oil

Many of the recipes in the magazine seem to use butter as the moisturizing agent. I always use olive oil.

When I make oatmeal cereal for breakfast, I deliberately add a teaspoon or so of olive oil along with the flax, wheat germ, lecithin, walnuts, cinnamon, raisins and whatever else. Then I top it off with sliced banana.

I cook fish under aluminum foil. It keeps the moisture in instead of letting it evaporate from the fish. I also cook "sunny-side up" eggs that way, and I don't need to turn them over.

ROBERT FISHER
Owego, New York

Mending Memories

Your mending article in the March/April issue of Grit ("Don't Toss It: Mend It," Page 42) brought back memories of my childhood.

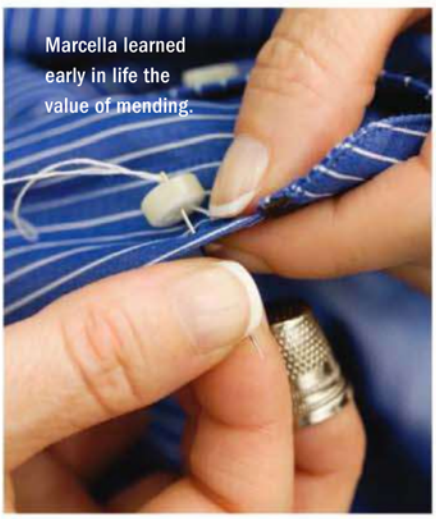
One of the first things I remember about mending is my mother holding my dad's denim overalls on her lap, threading her needle and reaching for her thimble. She chose a piece of old denim that matched as near as possible, placed it under the hole, pinned it secure and proceeded to make the edges neat with no frays.

As time went on, she taught me methods to conserve all our clothes. When items were no longer wearable, we tore them into strips, sewed the ends together and crocheted them into an oval rug for our floors. My mother made the crochet hook we used from a piece of hickory wood.

Someone gave me a beautiful polka dot dress that was faded. I took it apart and put it together with the wrong side out. It was exactly the same pattern. The button holes were on the wrong side, so we worked new holes and sewed the buttons on the other side. I was so proud of my ingenuity at 13 years of age.

Thank you for your wonderful magazine.

MARCELLA SPENCE
Lewisburg, Tennessee



Marcella learned early in life the value of mending.

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Dick, from Maine, prefers fishing for trout as opposed to the invasive walleye. Photo: iStockphoto.com/Greg Cooper

Preserving Tomato Bounty

A recent conversation with your editor (Hi, Dad!) brought up the end-of-the-season question of what to do with your bumper crop of tomatoes – especially when you live in the city and don't have tons of room. After making 20 quarts of tomato sauce and salsa, I inevitably still have tomatoes left. Here are a couple of simple recipes to take care of that tasty surplus.

DRIED TOMATOES

Slice tomatoes as thin as possible and lay them flat in a food dehydrator – mine usually go for about 24 hours.

As soon as they are crispy and dry, stack them in a Mason jar and cover with olive oil. Refrigerate and use within a week or so to avoid any worries with botulism. If you have more crispy-dry tomatoes than you would consume in a week, you can freeze them until you need them.

These are great for focaccia, or tossed with pasta. The olive oil becomes flavored as well.

OVEN-ROASTED TOMATOES

Slice tomatoes in half and lay them on a jellyroll pan. Drizzle with olive oil. Sprinkle with sea salt and fresh cracked pepper and whatever other herbs you desire.

Place in oven set to the lowest temperature – on my oven that's about 180 degrees.

Roast until desired consistency – I like mine to stay a little plump, but not burned. This may take anywhere from 6 to 12 hours depending upon the size of the tomatoes.

Let tomatoes cool, then bag into freezer bags – I bag by the serving size. Top off the bags with the excess olive oil from the pan. Toss in the freezer, and they'll last you through the winter; add them to breads, sauces and pastas.

For an extra kick, drizzle balsamic vinegar on them before roasting.

A treat in our house is to take a bag of roasted tomatoes and blend it with cream cheese – tastes better than store-bought!

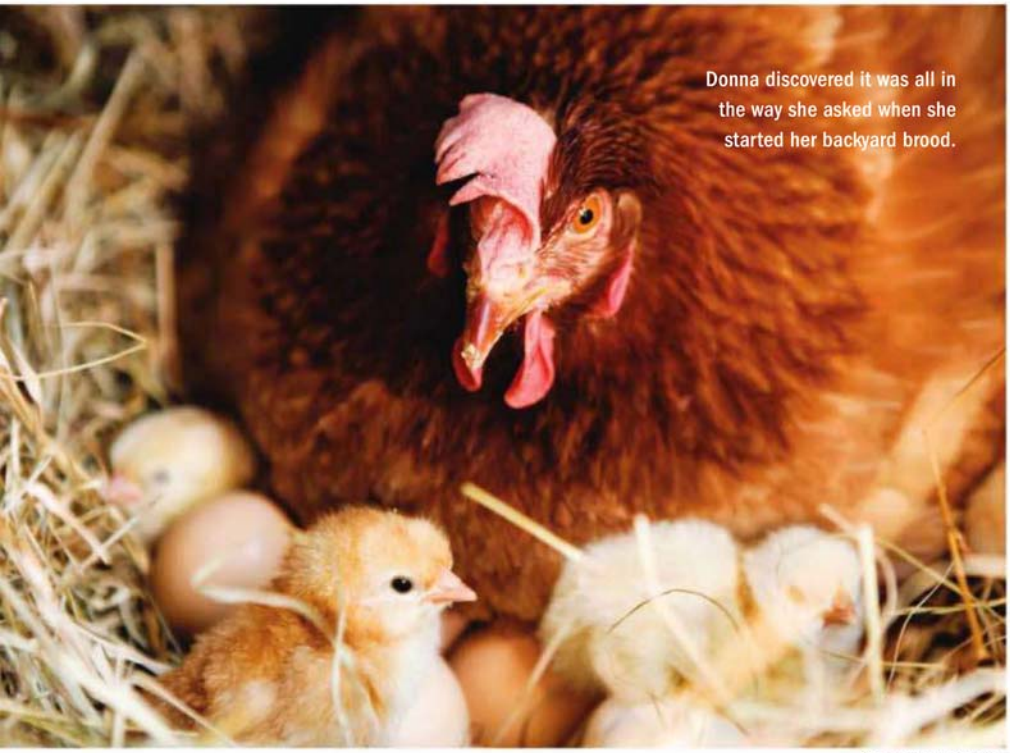
ERIN C. MIDTLYNG
Chicago, Illinois

Brilliant! A chip off the old block. Nothing like preserving a little summer sunshine for later enjoyment, Erin. – Hank Will, editor and Erin's dad

Swimmin' With the Fishes

This is about your fishing article in the May/June issue ("Gettin' Fishy," Page 72). Being a lifelong fisherman, I enjoy reading about the pleasures one derives from fishing the local streams and ponds. Growing up, I spent countless days fishing for bass, sunfish, perch and crappie.

On the other hand, I cannot agree with people who consider the walleye such a



Donna discovered it was all in the way she asked when she started her backyard brood.

iStockphoto.com/Borko Ciric

wonderful species. The most sought-after fish in the north-central United States? Well, they are sought-after here in Maine, too – for the purpose of eradication. The selfish few lawbreakers who illegally introduced the non-native walleye and northern pike have caused irreparable damage to the thriving native fish population of salmon and trout in the pristine waters of Maine. Let the Minnesotans, etc., have their walleye and pike. Let us have our trout and salmon.

I live near the coast and have enjoyed striped bass and bluefish fishing as well. Now that is also fun and tasty!

DICK CHOROSZY
Kennebunk, Maine

Nothing worse than non-native species wiping out a native fishery, Dick. We have carp and all kinds of non-native rough fish to contend with here. Keep after those trout and salmon; that's wonderful fishing, indeed. – Editors

It's All in the Wording

The article in the May/June Grit about the movement toward keeping laying hens in urban areas ("Hatch a Revolution," Page 22) reminds me of an experience in the early 1970s when we lived in Nevada.

As I recall, there was a terrible outbreak of Newcastle disease that was devastating to egg production nationwide, causing the price of store-bought eggs to skyrocket. We decided we wanted some laying hens in the backyard of our home in North Las Vegas, as both my husband and I remembered that being the norm when we were children. I called City Hall to check on ordinances about keeping a small flock of laying hens within city limits and was told very emphatically, "No way."

Well, that was that … for awhile. Then as Easter approached, we began seeing baby chicks advertised here and there. Hmmm. I called the city again and changed my question. "We'd like to get some baby chicks for our two little girls for Easter gifts. Is it OK for them to have some pet chicks?"

No problem at all. As a matter of fact, the person with whom I spoke went into great detail to remind me of the summer heat in that area and to give me suggestions for shade, water, housing, etc. It seemed that while "laying hens" were out of the question, "pet chickens" were just fine. We could not help it that our pets grew up and began laying eggs!

As a matter of fact, we also kept a rooster for several years. We talked with all our neighbors first, who insisted they wouldn't mind at all. We asked that if the rooster's crowing bothered any of them, would they please notify us first rather than calling animal control, and we'd be happy to find him a new home. The only comments we ever heard from our neighbors were, "I just love hearing your rooster," "I haven't heard a rooster crow since I was a child," and such.

We never had a visit from any city officials, and our neighbors shared in our bounty of eggs and compost materials for their flowerbeds.

Now, many years later, we live in the country and keep not only chickens but more than a hundred free-ranging guineas that keep our part of the county free of ticks. Life is good.

DONNA SHELBY
Comanche, Oklahoma
Shelby Acres Okie-Dokie Kiko Goats

Donna, life IS good. Letters like these serve as a constant reminder. – Editors

$12 Steak

Hank Will's editorial ("Local Flavor Not So Local," Page 6 in the May/June issue) really hit home for my husband and me. When we bought this little farm, for the first time, we raised chickens for the meat and eggs as well as butchered a pig and a steer to supplement our large garden.

We read a lot of "how-to" books leading up to the projects, and I will admit that maybe not all the cuts of meat looked professional, but, boy, there is nothing like knowing exactly where your food came from – not to mention the taste. My goodness, I didn't even realize I liked eggs

until I had the first of our farm-fresh eggs.

We were traveling recently and therefore had to "indulge" by going out to eat. There is no bigger letdown than the realization that the steak you just paid $12 for tasted like something you would have stewed up in the slow cooker to try and tenderize it a bit and hope that the garden fresh veggies would add some flavor.

My husband recently joined the Air Force, and the thought of leaving our little farm where we have the ability to grow most of our food saddens me almost as much as being away from our family.

Thank you for all the great issues of Grit, and know that no matter where this country couple is stationed, Grit will accompany us. Thanks again, and keep up the good work!

JESSE and JESSIE REINING
Long Prairie, Minnesota
(Soon to be Little Rock Air Force Base)

We're proud to accompany you on your mission, and thanks for taking on such a weighty new responsibility. – Editors

Jesse and Jessie know the value and the taste of homegrown foods. iStockphoto.com/Jill Chen

Shucks

While I didn't read all of the article "Ears to Corn" in your May/June issue (Page 64), I did read the box titled "Little Kernels of Fun," in which the author writes, "A bushel of corn contains around 30,000 kernels of corn."

I haven't farmed for a few years, but when I quit farming, virtually all bags of seed corn sold had a total of 80,000 kernels of corn per bag. Depending on the seed size, one purchased many bags with 80,000 kernels in the small flats, and small rounds only weighed about 45 pounds per bag.

Even then most of the larger seed sizes rarely weighed more than 56 pounds, which is one bushel of corn.

When my father started irrigating in our area in 1966, one could buy a bag of seed corn in the small flats or rounds that weighed one bushel and the seed count was right around 120,000 in a bushel of seed corn.

KENNETH NAYSMITH
Belleville, Kansas

Excellent catch, Kenneth, and we regret the oversight. Thanks for pointing this out! – Editors

Constricting Urban Sprawl

Could someone please offer some advice on how to deal with city, county, etc., harassment of those of us who wish to retain a rural lifestyle making our living, doing business, using our properties, etc.?

There are those who come to our rural community because of its charm, then proceed to try to run us out of our own town through code enforcement, rezoning and more. Then we'll have just another urban sprawl city.

HARV DYKSTRA
Wildomar, California

Readers, how do you deal with ever-expanding urban development? – Editors

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

Grit welcomes letters from our readers. If you would like to comment on an article or share your opinions, send a letter (with photographs, if available) to Grit, Mail Call, 1503 S.W. 42nd St., Topeka, KS 66609, or e-mail us at *Letters@Grit.com.*

GRIT gear

SWEEPSTAKES WINNERS!

Grit is thrilled to announce the winners of the first two Grit Gear Sweepstakes.

Tim Anderson, of Etters, Pennsylvania, took home the cold frame provided by *MasterGardening.com*, and Mary Clements, Onancock, Virginia, was ecstatic to win the rain barrel from RainBarrelUSA.

Keep reading, there are plenty more sweepstakes to come! (See Page 31 for the latest – a smoker/grill giveaway.)

The Live Oak Hotel

Hobos riding the rails during the Great Depression found shelter under the branches of a huge oak tree.

By Joyce L. Blume Illustrations by Wayne Stroot

MISSISSIPPI HAD SOME of the most picturesque oak trees in the world. One oak tree in particular stands out in my youthful memories, one my siblings and I affectionately called the Live Oak Hotel.

In Pass Christian, the small coastal town where I was born and lived during the peak of the Great Depression, our house nestled along the Louisville and Nashville railroad tracks on the corner of Railroad Street and Mercier Avenue.

The Live Oak Hotel was just about a half-mile down the tracks from the house, and while I have many memories of the L&N Railroad, those I like the most are the half-mile trips to visit that favorite old oak tree. It must have been several hundred years old. It was huge, with large limbs, and draped with Spanish moss that hung down all around, clear to the ground. The moss formed a screen around the tree, giving privacy to the hobos who often camped there.

Many times we passed the hotel and saw laundry hanging on the tree's limbs and smoke rising through its branches. We knew there were travelers camping under the tree. They would wash their clothes in the nearby ditch and hang them out to dry. From a distance, we couldn't see under the tree because the draping moss hid them from view.

At times, the hobos would see us and invite us to come under the tree. They would talk for hours as we sat on the ground huddled close, since our mother and grandmother warned us to beware of strangers. Soon enough, we lost all fear of these men and enjoyed watching them cook their skimpy meals in old, rusty tin cans. At times, some would ask if we would go home and ask our mother if she could spare an onion or a potato or two. Our mother was usually at work, and we children, being filled with generosity and pity, would go home and raid our cupboard and give them the food that we ourselves needed. We had seven mouths to feed and little money coming in. Our father was hospitalized at the Veterans Hospital, and Mother had to work on the WPA, with only a meager monthly wage. But I don't remember her ever complaining about us feeding the hobos.

I will never forget the time I loaned Mother's entire new set of aluminum cookware to two hobos who came to the house and asked to borrow some pots. The pots were sooty from cooking on the old kitchen woodstove, so I saw no harm in handing them over. Besides, I felt sorry for the hobos having to cook in rusty tin cans, and they did promise to return the pots as soon as they finished. I trusted them and thought to myself, "Mother won't know about it. The pots will be returned before she comes home from work." Not so! Here it was almost dark and there was no sign of the men returning the pots. I began to worry.

My mother had no sooner gotten in the house when my tattletale sister told her what I had done. Needless to say, I was patriotic; I saw stars and stripes, as the old saying goes. Besides whipping me with her favorite peach tree switch, she scolded me in a not-so-soft voice and sent me to bed without any supper. This punishment didn't bother me because it was nothing new. Many times we went to bed hungry in those days. The whipping didn't bother me much either, but it did upset me that our friends had not kept their promise.

Early the next morning, there was a loud knock on the back-porch screen door. Mother answered it and, lo and behold, there stood the two men to whom I had loaned the pots. They had cleaned all the soot off with sand, and the pots were as shiny as new. One of the men apologized for not returning them the night before, and he could not thank her enough for her kindness.

Mother's face showed an expression of surprise, and she thanked the men for cleaning and returning her pots. She even offered them a cup of coffee, but they said they already had some and thanked her, just the same. They were going to hop a freight train and return home to their families.

Mother told me she was sorry she had scolded me so severely, but she stood firm on not ever loaning out her pots again. She also reminded me she was still paying the Jewel Tea Co. for her pots and could not afford to buy more. Others may not be as honest as those two men. She also lectured us for the umpteenth time about visiting the Live Oak Hotel. She might just as well have told us to quit breathing.

I will always cherish this time in my life, and I will never forget that beautiful old oak. I can imagine that it was the only tree in the world that could claim an award (if there was such a thing) for being so generous to provide so many men with shelter in a time of need.

Joyce Blume, Youngstown, Florida, has been writing short stories and poetry for many years.

WWW.GRIT.COM Rekindle the tin-plate thrill with a trip to the woods.

Looking for . . .

Homes to swap, pen pals, seeds, country knowledge and good ol' rural friends.

SWAP HOMES. I'm looking for a house in New Mexico between Santa Fe and Belen, south of Albuquerque. I would appreciate hearing from someone who wants to swap houses. I have a cottage on 1.1 acres on the Kennebec River in Maine, in a town of 2,000. I'm interested in a rural area, but not isolated, with an adobe, hacienda or farmhouse near amenities.

Miriam Miller Black
62 Pleasant Drive
Benton, ME 04901-3419

MIDDLE AMERICA PAL. I have many memories of Chicago during the 1960s and beyond. I also have a love for all things British, and I enjoy improvisational karaoke, travel, writing prose and old American cars. At 59, I feel just fine and would enjoy writing to pen pals.

Kent Busby
601 Smith St.
Carmi, IL 62821-1216

YOUNG GARDENER. I'm 8 years old and writing this with help from my mom. I would like to find seeds for my garden. I want my garden to have only plants with animal names, so I'm looking for plants like Hens and Chicks, Elephant Ears, Toad Lilies, and any other animal-named flowers or plants. I love gardening and would love any help with seeds, bulbs or ideas.

M.L.J.
c/o Angela Jones
141 Rose Creek Road
Glasgow, KY 42141-7936

FAMILY MEMBERS. I'm trying to locate a few family members on my father's side. My father's name was B.P. Thornton, and he died in December 1988 in Vidalia, Georgia. I'm looking for the following people: Frankie Cable (grandson to Dad's sister, Mattie Lotroll Coleman), Kenneth Eugene Lemmons (he was married to Dad's daughter, Virginia, and the last address I have is in Jackson, Mississippi); James A. Thornton (Dad's son, last address is in Blue Springs, Missouri); and James Coleman (Dad's nephew, last address is in Texas). If anyone knows anything about these people, I'd love to hear from you.

Elizabeth Burton
1405 Roberts Ct., Apt. 153
McKee, KY 40447-8823

EDGE OF NOWHERE. I'm a 21-year-old from the Edge-of-Nowhere, Kansas, looking for any stories, hopefully from around the Dust Bowl, World War II or earlier. Any story will suffice. I am interested in history, and I figure this is the best way to learn something. I'd appreciate it!

Kate Clouse
6762 SE 60 St.
Murdock, KS 67111-8816

COUNTRY WRITER. I would love to hear from people who know or would like to know about David Grayson (pen name of Ray Stannard Baker, 1870-1946), who wrote wonderful stories with country wit and wisdom. Two of his books are: *Under My Elm* and *Adventures in Contentment*. Baker also received the Pulitzer Prize for his biography of President Woodrow Wilson.

Edward R. Bolton
138 Elva Loop Road
Symsonia, KY 42082-9038

PAST PEN PAL. Looking for a former pen pal, Jeanne Wigen, who lived in Cobleskill, New York. She was divorced and remarried to a man named George; I don't know the last name. Last I knew they moved to Naples, Florida. I'd appreciate any information.

Elma Craig
4670 Owl Creek Road
Murphy, NC 28906-7491

HOLLYHOCK. I'm looking for Double Hollyhock seeds, and I'm also looking for country pals.

J. Sims
39474 S. 670 Road
Jay, OK 74346-3447

CRAFT SUPPLIES. I'm disabled and live in an isolated area. I am looking for all kinds of needlework tools and any unwanted craft supplies. Does anyone have Samoyed dog hair or musk ox hair I could spin into yarn? It sure would brighten my day!

Darlene Thacker
12240 W. Calle Seneca
Tucson, AZ 85743-9092

HOMESTEADER PEN PAL. I am a 27-year-old in southern South Dakota looking for pen pals who share my interests in reading, traveling, homesteading and learning new things.

Angie Houk
46737 319th St.
Burbank, SD 57010-7001

Send your requests to

Friends & Neighbors, c/o GRIT Magazine, 1503 S.W. 42nd St., Topeka, KS 66609. Please print or write legibly and include a daytime phone number – it won't be published – for fact checking. Letters may be edited or shortened and will be printed at our discretion as space allows – not every letter is published. GRIT is not responsible for any correspondence you may receive because your name and address appear in print.

A Barrel Garden and an Easy Fire Starter

from our friends at Farm Show ®

Nathaniel Burson's space-saving garden in a barrel.

Garden in a Barrel

"A lot of people want to have a garden, but don't have enough space. Barrel gardening may be the answer, even if you only have a few square feet to work with," says Nathaniel Burson, Big Sandy, Texas.

He's come up with a low-cost system that lets you convert used plastic barrels into highly productive container gardens.

"Lettuce, beets, carrots, strawberries, potatoes, tomatoes and many other kinds of plants can be grown in barrels. You can grow practically an entire garden in just one barrel," Burson says.

The idea is to make "pockets" around the outside of the barrel, then fill it with soil. Plants grow in the pockets and also on top. The bottom of the barrel is punctured to allow drainage.

You can water manually through a center pipe or automatically on a timer. Both ways are explained on the plans included with the barrel, along with step-by-step instructions for making the pockets and mixing the fertilizers.

Pockets are made by heating the plastic with a heat gun and cutting 6-inch-long slits, at intervals, into the barrel. A specially cut wooden brace is then wedged into each slit to make the pocket. Once the plastic cools down, the braces can be pulled out.

"The beauty of this system is that every available square foot is used," says Burson. "A 30-gallon barrel will produce enough lettuce for the average family to have a salad a couple times a week. The barrels can even be stacked on top of each other for more efficient use of space.

"A 55-gallon barrel will hold 72 plants on the outside, and a lot more on top. If you're really cramped for space, you can also use plastic 5-gallon buckets," says Burson.

To make the barrel gardens easy to water, he inserts a piece of PVC pipe with holes drilled into it down the center of the barrel.

An instructional plans/DVD set that shows in detail how to make a barrel garden is available from Burson for $29.95 plus $4.95 shipping and handling. A video preview is available on his website (*www.EasiestGardening.com/barrel-garden*), along with other gardening ideas.

Inexpensive Fire Starters

"We heat our home and office with woodstoves, so we're constantly starting fires. Our firewood is stored outside, so sometimes it's difficult to get it going. We tried commercial fire starters but were going through a couple boxes a month," says Regina Hoffman, Eagle Point, Oregon.

"I cut up some egg trays, so each egg cup is separate, and stack them in a bucket. I add used vegetable frying oil, which would normally have been thrown out. The egg cups soak up the oil. We can use more than one to start a fire, if needed. Works very well," she says.

Egg cartons and used vegetable oil make for an easy and inexpensive fire starter.

Both articles reprinted with permission from Farm Show Magazine, www.FarmShow.com.

Wascally Wabbits!

Hopping specialists have been around for millions of years, and it doesn't look like they're leaving anytime soon.

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

Call them wascally. Call them varmints. Call them a great 4-H project or a quiet pet for the apartment dweller. If you're somebunny who loves rabbits, hop on over. You'll enjoy this.

Let's say you were working in your garden 48 million years ago and noticed some damage to your lettuce. Uh-oh. Once you were done hollering things we can't print, scientists say you could have easily blamed a rabbit: By that time, bunnies had been mammals in their own right for a few million years. Even back then, says science, lagomorphs (members of the order Lagomorpha) hopped.

Hopping the globe, ancient Phoenicians spread rabbits by using them as a trade commodity, and warring Romans considered rabbits to be mobile meals. Although they are native to North America, rabbits weren't introduced to Great Britain until the 12th century. At that time, bunnies became domesticated. Today, because of their adaptability, wild rabbits are found on every continent except Antarctica (but give them time).

Though they come in dozens of sizes, shapes and colors, all domestic rabbits are descended from the European hare. Cute as a … well, cute as a bunny, you can find pet rabbits that are 4 inches long and a few ounces, fully grown. Conversely, you can own a rabbit the size and weight of a small Cocker Spaniel.

Respect the ears

Never pick up a rabbit by its ears, and you need to respect those long appendages: Rabbit ears can rotate up to 270 degrees and allow the animal to pick up two different sounds from two different directions at the same time. Because a rabbit is unable to sweat, its ears are rich with blood vessels that dissipate heat for a hot, cross bunny. Rabbit ears, by the way, also come in all sizes and shapes: Some of the smaller breeds have

WWW.GRIT.COM Learn to deal with "Rabbits in Your Garden."

un-bunny-like nubs for ears, and lop breeds have ears that flop downward. Alas, rabbit ears on your television only come in one style.

Much has been made about the rabbit's legendary breeding ability, and for good reason. A doe rabbit can get pregnant at 3 months of age, and with gestation at just 28 to 32 days, she can carry several litters a year. Each litter averages four to 12 kits. The largest litter on record is 24 tiny bunlets, which leads us to this hare-raising fact: Assuming that all the offspring survive, one mating pair of rabbits could produce four million descendants in one year's time. Wouldn't that make you hopping mad?

Speaking of baby bunnies, one of the differences between rabbits and hares is that rabbits are born blind and naked, while hares are born with hair and can see at birth.

A bunny's appetite

Gardeners know all too well what rabbits like to eat, but most people don't know that rabbits also like bananas, mint, bok choy, papayas and pineapples. Though you might consider this an ultra-healthy diet, you shouldn't be surprised if Bugs eats his own droppings, too. Rabbits have digestive systems similar to cows, but instead of chewing cud, they re-ingest certain nutrients through soft fecal matter. Despite that – which is pretty icky – rabbits don't have the ability to vomit.

But let's say you've been charmed by a bunny and found yourself a new pet. Rabbits are clean and quiet, although they can purr, scream, snore and snort in certain circumstances. They're perfectly happy to live in a cage, which is a good thing: Pet rabbits chew and can be destructive, and unaltered males will spray their territory. If you've got patience, you can teach a rabbit to "beg," use a litter box, enjoy being held, play with toys and come when it's called … all of which means that a rabbit is no dumb bunny!

Terri Schlichenmeyer, book reviewer and trivia collector, lives in Wisconsin with two dogs and 11,000 books.

TOP: A wild hare surveys his surroundings before continuing on his way.

Photo: iStockphoto.com/Igor Kisselev

LEFT: Settled in clover, a young rabbit readies for a bite of lunch.

Photo: iStockphoto.com/Mariya Bibikova

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Circle #21; see card pg 65

UPCOMING

Wild Horse and Burro ADOPTIONS

June 18-19	Swanzey, NH	July 14-28	Internet	August 6-7	Franklin Furnace, OH
25-26	Ft. Smith, AR	16-17	Harrington, DE	14	Morris, CT (mini-adoption, trained horses)
26	Catlett, VA (mini-adoption, gentled horses)	16-17	Gainesville, GA	13-14	Columbia, SC
June 23 - August 3	Mequon, WI	23-24	Versailles, KY	20-21	Jackson, MO

PHOTO: PETER ROBBINS

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U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Wild Horse and Burro Program

Circle #4; see card pg 65

The Secret of the Fizz

Carbonation can be tasty, when it works.

By Jennifer Nemec

WHEN I WAS LITTLE, MY MOM went through what she calls her "Earth Mother" phase (it was the '70s). At one point, she decided to make her own root beer. She sent away for a book with the recipe and some bottle caps. We followed the recipe, had a great time using my great-grandfather's bottle capper, and put the bottles in a cool corner of the basement to finish. Some time later, my brother and I went down to the basement to play and found sticky root beer on the walls and ceiling. The bottles hadn't exploded (we had those heavy-duty, glass pop bottles back then; the ones that you drank in the store so you got your nickel back), but the cap had blown off one of them. After that, I remember taking the bottles outside, carefully – "Point the bottles away from your face. … No, Jenny, don't point it toward your brother" – and dumping the contents, which smelled pretty strongly of bread dough. What went wrong?

It was all about our carbonation methods. We Americans love our fizzy drinks – soda pop, beer, champagne. Studies show that carbonation has a "taste." It activates the portions of our tongues that taste sour things (which is why flat drinks taste, well, flat).

Carbonation is created when carbon dioxide (CO_2) dissolves in liquid. The amount of CO_2 that will dissolve is dependent on temperature and pressure. CO_2 will dissolve in a liquid until "equilibrium" is reached – when the amount of carbon dioxide in the liquid and the amount in the air above the liquid are the same. In a sealed container, an excess of the gas can be dissolved if it is used to pressurize the airspace above the liquid. When you open a carbonated drink to the outside air, the pressure is released, and the CO_2 leaves the liquid to reestablish equilibrium. If you recap the bottle, enough escapes to return to equilibrium, leaving the liquid just a little bit flatter. If you leave it open to the air, most of the CO_2 will leave the liquid, and the drink will go completely flat.

Dissolved CO_2 can be added to beverages in two ways: forced and natural. In forced carbonation, CO_2 is added to the drink under pressure. Most bottles and cans of soda and beer use this kind of carbonation. When using natural carbonation, yeast and a little bit of sugar are added right before bottling to encourage a last bit of fermentation (see our American Brown Ale on Page 61). The yeast metabolizes the sugars and creates carbon dioxide and alcohol. The pressure and CO_2 build up inside the bottle and carbonate the drink. The amount of sugar and yeast added must be carefully controlled to keep the beer from becoming over-carbonated. The carbonation process stops when the yeast either runs out of food or is encouraged to go dormant.

Usually, in naturally carbonated sodas like Mom's root beer, because you want sweetness to remain in the final drink, the yeast reaction is controlled by refrigerating the bottles – most yeast becomes dormant at temperatures below 40 degrees. We had attempted natural carbonation and succeeded a bit too well. The yeast had done its work and created enough pressure to pop the tops off the bottles. I'm not sure if we forgot to put them in the fridge at the scheduled time or if the basement wasn't cool enough for the right yeast action, but our little experiment was certainly memorable. Mom says the rhubarb wine she made turned out much better.

When released to the atmosphere, carbonation can tickle the nose and please the palate.

Photo: iStockphoto.com/Vladimir Vladimirov

Web Editor Jenn Nemec's mom also made her own yogurt, which Jenn does not remember with fondness.

www.Grit.com **Revisit the great soft drink debate.**

Taming Wild Horses

Experienced trainer from Texas captures 2010 World Championship of Colt-Starting.

IMAGINE FOR A MOMENT picking a feral dog out of a pack of 10 or so, and trying to teach that wild animal to abandon its instincts and trust you. Name any animal, for that matter: the task is daunting. Now imagine facing a wild horse weighing more than 1,000 pounds, and having just a few hours to earn its trust well enough for the horse to be rideable and willing to perform a presentation and navigate an obstacle course in front of a packed arena.

The annual Road to the Horse Competition measures horsemanship by doing just that. The event was so named by Tootie Bland and late husband Steven (it was originally El Camino de Caballo, only people didn't pronounce it correctly) and refers to the movement to get back to our roots of taming and training horses in a natural way, to listen and work with the horse as the horse does within the herd, and shed the predator role that humans have adopted in the past. Three of the world's top horse trainers and clinicians gather in the same arena, pick geldings out of a remuda of 10 horses, then in a little over three hours they rope, train and display them, all the while wearing headpiece microphones so the crowd can hear their every word.

Craig Cameron, Bluff Dale, Texas, took top honors at the 2010 Road to the Horse, leaving the Tennessee Miller Coliseum in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, with the distinction of being the 2010 World Champion of Colt-Starting.

"Really, it is a man working through the power of understanding. Those circumstances change moment to moment when you're in there with a horse that's really a wild horse," Cameron says. "You've got to keep remembering that the horse is a prey animal, and if you push too hard – heck, if you push too fast or present things in a way he can't understand – you're going to get nothing but instinct from the horse, the instinct to survive. When a horse starts working like that, he bites or kicks or bucks or paws, he does whatever he has to do. Your main job is to show him that you're not going to hurt him."

In the beginning though, when Cameron and fellow horsemen Richard Winters and Ken McNabb gathered to pick which horse they'd work with, the power of understanding escaped many in the arena as Cameron selected a small 2007 AQHA Palomino gelding, WR Shining Alamo.

"He was probably the least likely horse anybody was going to choose," Cameron says. "I knew I might be going out on a limb picking the horse that I picked because he was

www.Grit.com Collect game pieces for a chance to win a saddle.

Craig Cameron works to gain the trust of WR Shining Alamo. OPPOSITE: The remuda for 2010 was supplied by Wood Ranch, Heber Springs, Arkansas.

courtesy Sara Bewley and Road to the Horse (2)

wild-looking, he was ragged-looking, and he didn't have much polish on him at all, but what I did like, and the reason I chose him, is he acted brave."

Cameron could tell Shining Alamo's bravery by how he acted within the remuda. He would move away from the rest of the pack of horses, he'd slip away, put his head down and look around at his surroundings.

"I thought to myself, 'You know, that horse there, he's got some bravery to him,'" Cameron says.

Initially, it seemed like a mistake. When Cameron first went into the pen to work him during the first training session, Shining Alamo didn't want anything to do with him.

"Honestly, I had to use all of my skills to get the halter on that horse. He was head-shy and really on guard, but when I got him haltered and got to work, he started coming through and was the brave horse that I thought he might be."

After the first short training session on Day 1 where each horse made slow progress, it was on to Day 2 with the competition wide open. As horse and rider got to know one another and trust was gained, the three horsemen showcased their horses adeptly through the required rail work and obstacle course. Adding a twist, the Road to the Horse obstacle course included a person sitting in a chair wearing a gorilla costume. All three colts breezed by the unusual obstacle without drama.

Each year, the final stage of the competition features a short freestyle presentation where horsemen select a performance to showcase their colt's strong points and accomplishments over the two days. Cameron – who'd nicknamed his horse Troubadour after his favorite George Strait song – chose to ride to his colt's namesake song, at one point dropping the reins and dramatically outstretching his arms while at a canter.

In the end, it was Cameron who rose above the other two horsemen to claim the title of World Champion. It was his third attempt at the title, and that made it all the sweeter for him.

"Every time I've competed at Road to the Horse, I've left a piece of my heart in the arena. Now I'm getting a little bit of that back. I truly believe winning Road to the Horse is going to change my life. I'm 61 years old, and now I am a world champion and no one can ever take that away from me. This may be the best day of my life."

Here's guessing three hours of natural horsemanship – think of roping a wild horse in the morning and working cattle with him in the evening – was probably a life-changing experience for more than just Cameron.

— Caleb D. Regan

Relishing Horseradish

A friendly gathering produces gallons of the spicy stuff.

Peeling horseradish takes patience; friendship and laughter also help.

courtesy Nancy Kline (3)

AS YOU PULL UP to the Snavely home in Ohio on this late fall day, the first thing you notice is a crackling bonfire in the driveway. Several men gather around the black kettle suspended above the flames. Behind them are several tables. Men either stand or sit around them – all are laughing and talking.

One night a year, you see pickups and cars line the road near Kevin Snavely's rural Pandora, Ohio, home. Gathering in the late afternoon, visitors bring jars, white vinegar and their own horseradish roots. For the past 10 years, the group has gathered to grind horseradish for personal use.

"We usually have about 50 or 60 men show up," Snavely says. "It started small and just grew."

It began with two men, Snavely and his friend Ron Busch from Ottawa, Ohio. Co-workers at a manufacturing plant in Ottawa, both men enjoyed growing and grinding horseradish root for consumption.

"We would get together to make it," Busch says. "It takes quite a bit of work and doing it together made the time go faster."

Other co-workers became interested in growing their own horseradish.

"It's easy to grow," Busch says. "I would just take a cutting from my roots and give it to them for a start." Busch and Snavely invited friends and co-workers who were growing their own horseradish to join together to make the root into a seasoning condiment.

"As word spread, we started getting guys showing up just offering to help if they could take home a few jars of their own horseradish," Snavely says. "These guys would bring the white vinegar we put with the ground horseradish." Everyone brings their own jars to what is now known as the annual horseradish-making party.

As the numbers of participants grew, Busch and Snavely looked for easier ways to accomplish some of the steps in making horseradish. They found two old wringer washing machines to clean the pungent roots. The wringers were taken off, and the machines are hooked up in Snavely's side yard for the evening.

"It works great," Busch says. "We put clean water in the tubs and throw in the dirty roots. The agitation washes the dirt off the roots." He says they have to keep adding clean water.

"This part doesn't require a lot of manpower, just when we change the water and take the roots in and out," Busch says.

"That's where the hard work is done." Busch motions toward a group of men seated around a table. The men are using sharp knives to peel the horseradish roots. Joking and laughing, they keep a close eye on their work. The long, twisted roots of the horseradish can be difficult to peel. Unlike a carrot or potato, this vegetable root is often twisted and grooved.

www.Grit.com Cultivate horseradish and make your own recipes.

"This part of the job takes a lot of time," Busch says. "So this is where you will find a lot of the guys working."

Just beyond the men peeling the horseradish is a large meat grinder. Fans blow the pungent odor away from the two men feeding the peeled roots into the grinder.

"It can really make your eyes burn," says Kenny Palte, as he feeds horseradish into the grinder. "I'm glad they have the fans set up."

Once the horseradish is ground into large containers, it is taken to another table where several men ladle the relish into different-sized containers. Then they pour white vinegar into the jars; the vinegar prevents the relish from becoming bitter. Filled jars line another table.

"Three years ago we made 30 gallons of horseradish," Snavely says. "We had about 65 guys here working to make it."

Snavely says he likes horseradish on anything: pork, hamburgers and even in soup. Busch says his favorite way to eat horseradish is on any pork cut. One worker said he likes to eat the condiment on hot dogs.

Back in the driveway, Dick Hoffman is busy cooking soup for the workers.

"I guess I've been doing this ever since the guys started making horseradish together," Hoffman says. "I just make what Kevin asks for. Some years it's vegetable soup, other years it's been chili or cabbage soup." Last fall he was busy making jambalaya soup. He insists anyone who ventures near the fire take a sample. Volunteers looking for a break wander over for a bowl of the hot soup.

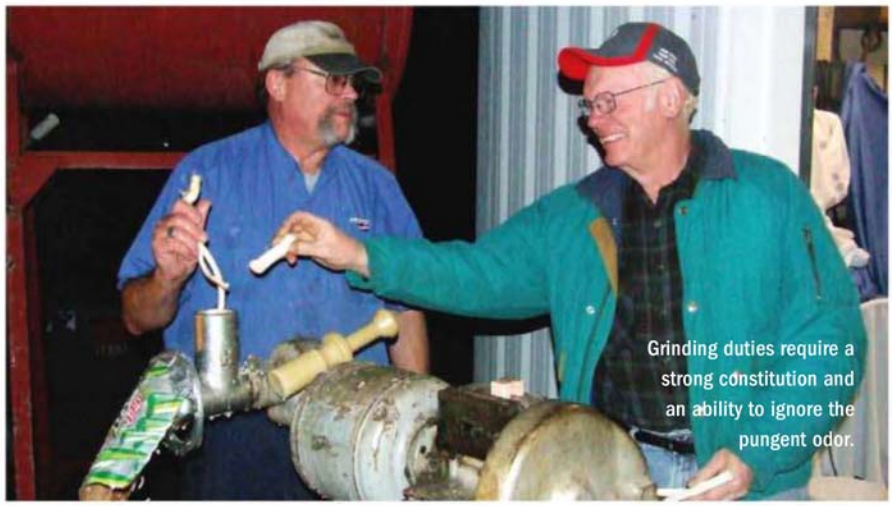
"I like being here because it's always a good time," Hoffman says. "I think some of the guys come just for that."

Snavely agrees. "When we're done, everyone takes home what they think they need. It's a good time."

— Nancy Kline

Before the horseradish goes into the grinder, it's cut into manageable pieces.

iStockphoto.com/Lawrence Chien



Grinding duties require a strong constitution and an ability to ignore the pungent odor.

The last step in the process — placing the ground horseradish in jars and covering with vinegar.

Fresh Milk: What's the Fuss?

Wisconsin event offers information to producers and consumers.

ONE SIDE URGES FREEDOM of choice. The other side argues that health is the top concern. And the debate over raw milk continues.

Nearly 300 people from around the world recently attended the Second Annual International Raw Milk Symposium in Madison, Wisconsin. The event was organized by the Farm to Consumer Foundation, a nonprofit organization focused on increasing education about food issues. The foundation is the primary source of income for the Farm to Consumer Legal Defense Fund, which states as its mission, "Defending the rights and broadening the freedoms of family farms, and protecting consumer access to raw milk and nutrient dense foods."

The first symposium was held in Toronto to facilitate an international discussion regarding raw milk. In the year that followed, a flurry of activity occurred for both producers and consumers, including a victory by Canadian raw milk producer Michael Schmidt after a long and costly court battle, as well as a coordinated crackdown on raw milk producers in Wisconsin.

Raw milk advocates say the main issue concerning the product is freedom of choice. They cite claims that raw milk has helped people with health concerns such as asthma and immune issues, and that pasteurizing milk not only destroys harmful bacteria, it destroys good enzymes and proteins in the milk. Many supporters line up on the side of people knowing where their food comes from, and they advocate that consumers meet the dairy farmer and inspect a local farm's facilities on a regular basis.

On the opposite side of the argument are government health officials who say pasteurized milk (milk that has been heated to up to 161°F for up to 20 seconds) is the only safe product for consumers, particularly the young, elderly or those with weakened immune systems. Citing several health outbreaks attributed to raw milk, officials say their one and only concern

WWW.GRIT.COM Learn more about a raw milk producer.

iStockphoto.com/Peter-John Freeman

is the safety of the public. Officials at the Food and Drug Administration say consumption of unpasteurized milk caused at least 187 hospitalizations, 1,614 illnesses and two deaths from 1998 to 2008.

This year, the symposium focused on the health benefits of raw milk, and how this issue fits into the larger issue of consumer rights concerning food. The event took place even as debate continues regarding the legalities of selling and the safety of consuming raw milk. In Wisconsin, as this issue went to press, a recently forwarded bill – allowing limited sales of unpasteurized milk directly off the farm – had been vetoed by the governor.

The aim of the symposium was to educate people about milk and to help counter the anti-fresh milk outlook that pervades many state dairy-regulating bodies. Symposium participants concluded that the real issue is not whether raw milk is perfectly safe; it is that, as citizens, we have the right to choose whether we feed our families with fresh product directly from the farmer or a burger from a fast-food restaurant.

— Andy Sell

Red Brand, the number one name in ag fencing, has been supporting the FFA for over 63 years. And now, they've developed a way to directly support your local FFA chapter. It's called Home Grown.

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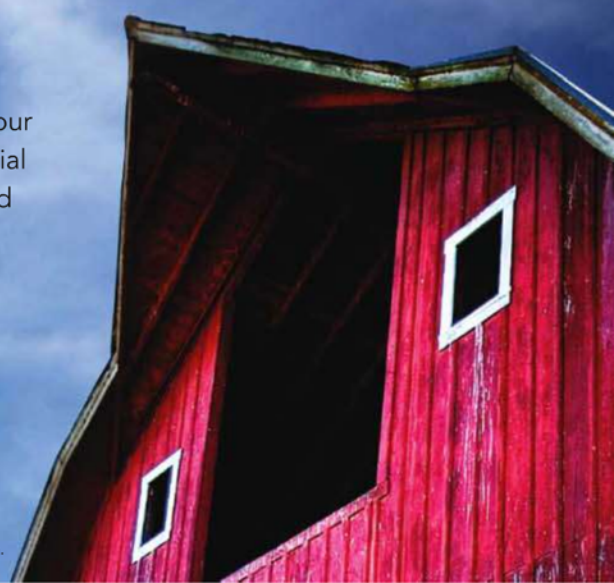

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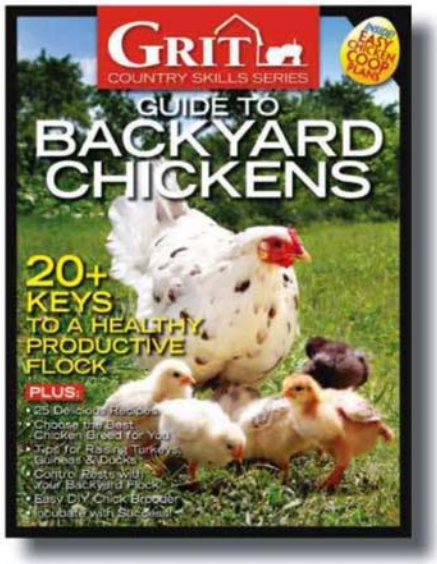
Introducing *GRIT's* GUIDE TO BACKYARD CHICKENS



GRIT magazine is proud to introduce its special *Guide to Backyard Chickens*. At 100 full-color pages, this one-of-a-kind reference book is designed to arm you with all the information needed to enjoy the simple country pleasures of farm-fresh eggs and poultry, straight from your own backyard.

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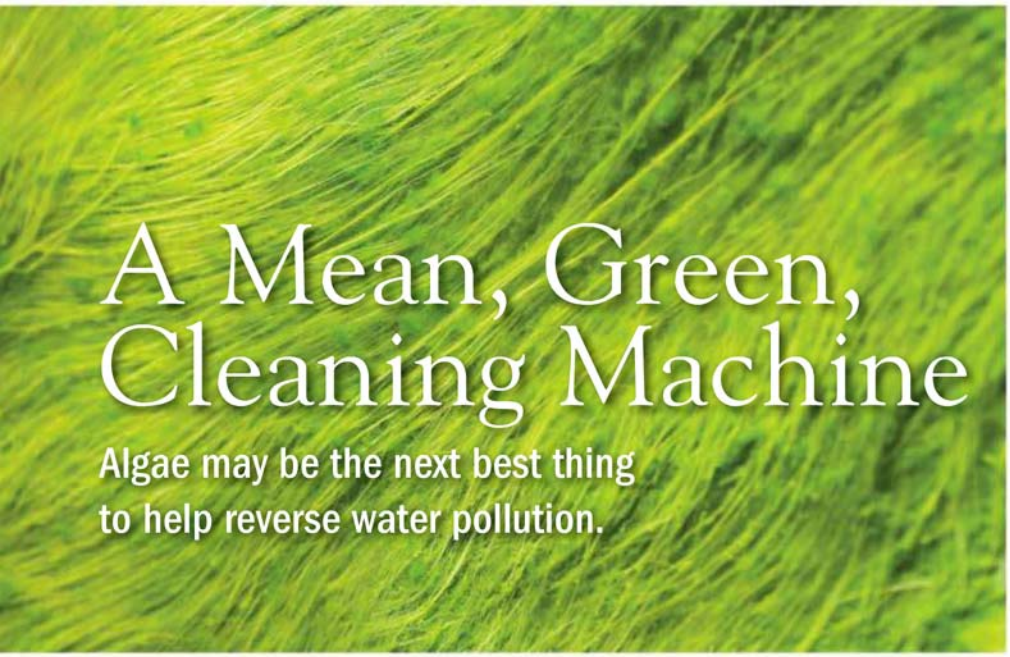
A Mean, Green, Cleaning Machine

Algae may be the next best thing to help reverse water pollution.



courtesy Edwin Remsburg/Agricultural Research Service (D1756-1)

IT SOUNDS LIKE A LATE-NIGHT infomercial pitch: a plant that grows at a monstrous pace in polluted water, soaks up CO_2 and cleans up manure runoff.

Agricultural Research Service microbiologist Walter Mulbry has discovered there's more to algae than stringy masses that muck up waterways. Though some scientists believe algae might be the next best thing in biofuel production, Mulbry thinks it can be used right now to reduce the nitrogen and phosphorus in livestock manure – then dried and sold as a slow-release fertilizer.

Livestock manure is used as a cheap and abundant field-crop fertilizer because it contains large amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus, both essential plant nutrients. But some of the nitrogen and phosphorus that isn't used by the crops can be washed into nearby streams and rivers and end up in sensitive waterways such as the Chesapeake Bay.

Like cultivated field crops, aquatic plants grow and flourish when nitrogen and phosphorus are plentiful. When these plants die, their decomposition robs the bay of oxygen, which in turn harms other aquatic life. A 2005 report by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, whose motto is "Save the Bay," estimated that animal manure contributes 18 percent of the nitrogen and 27 percent of the phosphorus that drain into the bay every year.

"Other researchers have looked at using algae-based systems to clean up municipal wastewater and other types of polluted water," says Mulbry, who is with the ARS Environmental Management and Byproduct Utilization Research Laboratory in Beltsville, Maryland. "So we built on that concept and focused on tracking manure nitrogen and phosphorus through the treatment system.

"Nutrient recovery values – the amounts of manure nitrogen and phosphorus that are added to the system compared with the amounts of algal nitrogen and phosphorus removed from the system – are surprisingly difficult to measure in the field because of frequent changes in manure characteristics."

In 2003, Mulbry set up four algal turf scrubber (ATS) raceways outside dairy barns at the ARS Henry A. Wallace Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. The shallow raceways were covered with nylon netting on which the algae grew. Then for the next three years, from April until December, submerged water pumps at one end of the raceways circulated a mix of fresh water and raw or anaerobically digested dairy manure over the algae.

Just add water and stir

Within two to three weeks after the ATS system was started up each spring, the raceways supported thriving colonies of green filamentous algae, including *Rhizoclonium hieroglyphicum*, the most abundant algae species, and *Microspora willeana, Ulothrix ozonata* and *Oedogonium sp.* Algae growth was highest in the spring and declined during the summer months in part because of the higher water temperatures and also because the raceways provided snails and midge larvae ample opportunity to graze on the algae.

Working with postdoctoral researcher Elizabeth Kedebe-Westhead and others, Mulbry harvested wet algae every four to 12 days, dried it, then analyzed it for nitrogen and phosphorus levels. Results indicate that the ATS system recovered 60 to 90 percent of the nitrogen and 70 to 100 percent of the phosphorus from the manure.

The potential benefits don't stop with nutrient capture. Mulbry also studied whether the dried algae had potential as an organic fertilizer. He found that corn and cucumber seedlings grown in algae-amended potting mixes performed as well as those grown with commercial fertilizers.

"It's possible that farmers using ATS management could sell the dried algae as an organic fertilizer for use by urban and suburban residents. It's a ready-made, 'Save the Bay' fertilizer," Mulbry says.

— Ann Perry, Agricultural Research Service Information Staff

NOTE: "Algae: A Mean, Green Cleaning Machine" was published in the May/June 2010 issue of Agricultural Research *magazine. The research is part of Manure and Byproduct Utilization (No. 206) and Food Safety (No. 108), two ARS programs described at the website* www.NPS.ARS.USDA.gov.

Pat Kangas and Walter Mulbry examine algae growing on a shallow raceway.

courtesy Edwin Remsburg/Agricultural Research Service (D1753-1)

www.Grit.com See how the windmill legacy continues in the United States.

Build Better Burgers

Fire up the grill and take a new look at an old standard.

By Mollie Cox Bryan
Photographs by Lori Dunn

Greek Style Burgers sizzling on the grill.

SOME HISTORIANS CLAIM that hamburgers come from Germany. Others suggest the ancient Egyptians enjoyed beef patties. There's also the story about the Mongols packing beef to travel and unwittingly inventing hamburgers because the meat was squashed from being packed so tightly beneath their riding gear. Several 19th-century Americans lay claim to the invention of the modern burger – one Tulsan even says he was the first to serve the round meat patty on a bun. But, according to John T. Edge's book *Hamburgers & Fries*, "The history of proletarian dishes like hamburgers is rarely explained by a linear progression of events." So perhaps many nations have a part in the history of the hamburger.

One thing is for certain – wherever the roots of the burger – Americans have been making the beef patties known as "hamburgers" their own for generations. Today, this includes a variety of options for ground meat, like turkey, and sometimes even vegetable products, such as soy, lentils, beans or mushrooms. Also, the best-built, tastiest burgers now often reflect the many cultures that make up the United States. Think Greek burgers, pizza burgers and Mexican burgers.

Because grilling or frying a burger is such a simple process, each part of the exercise is important – starting with selection of ingredients.

You can buy ground beef or turkey at most grocery stores, or you can grind it at home with a food processer – a time-consuming yet rewarding process. Ground beef at the grocers usually comes from one of three cuts: chuck, round or sirloin. Chuck is fattier than the others and so gives the most flavor. According to Bobby Flay, author of *Burgers, Fries and Shakes*, when checking for chuck, burger-lovers should look for 80 percent lean, 20 percent fat. Ground beef from round or sirloin tends to be leaner and so doesn't offer the richest flavor. Fat equals flavor.

For even leaner burger meat, look for "ground turkey meat," which is the ground muscle of the turkey without skin included. But "ground turkey" is ground whole muscle (no giblets) with attached fat and skin, and offers better flavor. Flay also recommends choosing the higher-fat ground turkey, marked 85 percent to 95 percent fat, for the best taste.

As far as cooking hamburgers, some people prefer a grill, others fry them in a cast-iron skillet or a nonstick pan on the stove. Countless types of charcoal, high-tech grills, special burger-making equipment and interesting hamburger spices are flooding the market. Whatever your preference on meat, cut, grill, skillet or charcoal, today's burgers are a testament to the many cultures and tastes reflected in the patchwork of our American culture.

Mollie Cox Bryan cooks and writes from her home in Waynesboro, Virginia. Her latest cookbook is Mrs. Rowe's Little Book of Southern Pie.

Feta cheese and Olive-Tomato Relish are a tasty topping for a Greek Style Burger fresh off the grill.

GREEK STYLE BURGERS

This burger was handed down to my friend Kristie Cross and is based on a recipe found in *The Better Homes and Garden Cookbook*. You can substitute beef for the turkey and get a juicier burger. Chicken can also be used for variation. "Either way, it's delicious, and the Olive-Tomato Relish really adds flavor to it," Kristie says.

BURGERS:

- 1 egg white
- ⅓ cup fine dry wheat bread crumbs
- 1 tablespoon milk
- 1 envelope (0.7 ounce) Italian salad dressing mix, divided
- 1 pound uncooked ground turkey, chicken or beef
- 4 pita bread rounds, toasted, or 4 hamburger buns, split and toasted
- ½ cup crumbled feta cheese

OLIVE-TOMATO RELISH:

- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 cup finely chopped tomato
- ¼ cup finely chopped cucumber
- ¼ cup finely chopped pitted kalamata or ripe olives

1 Beat egg white with whisk; stir in bread crumbs, milk and half of dry salad dressing mix. Add meat; mix well. (Reserve remaining half of dry salad dressing mix for Olive-Tomato Relish.)

2 Shape turkey mixture into four ¾-inch-thick patties. Place patties on grill rack (or in pan) directly over medium heat; grill for 14 to 18 minutes, or until meat is done, turning once halfway through grilling or cooking.

3 Serve the burgers on pita bread rounds with Olive-Tomato Relish (optional) and feta cheese. Yields 4 servings.

4 For Olive-Tomato Relish: Stir together white wine vinegar, olive oil and remaining dry salad dressing mix. Stir in tomato, cucumber and olives. Yields about 1⅓ cups.

SWEEPSTAKES SMOKE 'N GRILL

The Brinkmann Smoke 'N Grill, courtesy All Seasons Homestead Helpers, will hold up to 50 pounds of meat. Visit *www.Grit.com/grit-gear* to enter to win this smoker and grill.

CACCIATORE BURGERS ON A PORTOBELLO BUN (OR NOT)

My neighbor gave me this recipe, which is based on a Rachel Ray recipe. My neighbor prefers this burger with ground turkey and portobello mushrooms used as a bun, which is imaginative and delicious – but ground beef and hamburger buns work deliciously, as well.

BURGERS:

- 1⅓ pound ground beef or turkey
- Salt and pepper
- 6 crimini mushrooms (baby portobellos), stems removed and finely chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- ½ yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, smashed away from skin and finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- ½ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano or Romano
- Handful of flat-leaf parsley, chopped
- Extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling

PORTOBELLO 'BUNS':

- 4 large portobello mushroom caps, stems removed
- Olive oil
- Salt and black pepper
- 2 cups arugula leaves coarsely chopped, divided
- ½ pound fresh mozzarella, thinly sliced

Sliced red onion

Sliced fresh tomatoes

Cacciatore Burger on a Portobello Bun

1 Heat oven to 450°F (for the mushrooms). Over medium-high heat, heat large nonstick skillet or fire up grill.
2 Combine meat, salt, pepper, mushrooms, bell pepper, onion, garlic, tomato paste, Worcestershire, crushed red pepper flakes, cheese and parsley.
3 Form meat into 4 large patties, 1-inch thick; score top. Drizzle extra-virgin olive oil on top, then fry or grill 5 or 6 minutes on each side.
4 For "buns": Place portobello caps on small baking sheet, gill side up, and drizzle with olive oil. Roast caps 12 minutes. Remove from oven and season with salt and pepper. Turn oven off.
5 Top each cap with about ½ cup arugula and a burger. Cap burger with mozzarella and place back in still-warm oven. Melt cheese 1 minute. Transfer burgers on "bun" bottoms to plates. Top with onions and tomatoes and serve.

SAFE BURGER HANDLING TIPS

- To prevent cross-contamination, keep raw and cooked meat separate, using individual cooking utensils and plates.
- Always wash hands, utensils, cutting boards and counters that contact raw meat.
- Cook all burgers until the internal temperature reaches 160°F, as measured with a kitchen thermometer.
- Use a thermometer to take the guesswork out of cooking ground beef. Insert a kitchen thermometer sideways into the center of the burger to ensure the correct internal temperature.

—from Omaha Steaks

Whether the salsa is on top or on the side, a Mexican Burger adds spice to the dinner table.

GETTING CREATIVE WITH TOPPINGS

TIPS

Coleslaw
Guacamole
Salsa
Sauerkraut
Pineapple
Chili
Bacon
Blue cheese
Hummus
Fried or grilled vegetable slices

MEXICAN BURGERS

Add some jalapeños or peppers to this spicy burger for a little more punch.

- 1 package taco seasoning
- 2 tablespoons minced onion
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 cup crushed corn chips
- 1 pound ground beef
- 6 slices cheddar cheese or pepper jack cheese
- 6 sandwich rolls

1 Over medium-high heat, heat large nonstick skillet or fire up grill.
2 Combine taco seasoning, onion, egg and crushed corn chips. Add ground beef and mix well. Form into 6 patties. Grill or fry 5 or 6 minutes on each side.
3 Place cheese slices on burgers and continue to cook until cheese is melted. Serve on sandwich rolls. Yields 6 servings.
4 Great toppings for this burger include lettuce, tomato, onion and some salsa to give it a little flare.

THE BIG LASKOWSKI SPINACH BURGER

This simple but tasty burger recipe is an original recipe created by my friend Mark Laskowski. Freshly ground ginger is important to the recipe, and to the flavor.

- 1 pound ground beef
- Juice from ½ lime, freshly squeezed
- 1 tablespoon freshly grated ginger
- ½ cup cooked, chopped and well-drained spinach
- 1 egg
- ½ cup bread crumbs

1 Over medium-high heat, heat large nonstick skillet or fire up grill.
2 Combine all ingredients. Form meat into 4 large patties, 1-inch thick. Fry or grill 5 or 6 minutes on each side.
3 Try some feta cheese and/or plain yogurt as a topping for this Eastern-influenced burger.

BOURBON BARBECUE CHEESEBURGER

For a burger with a New Orleans beat, try this recipe from Omaha Steaks.

- 3 tablespoons Bourbon Caramelized Onions, recipe follows
- 1 hamburger patty
- Seasoning blend, to taste
- 2 slices thick-cut bacon
- 1 slice sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 onion kaiser roll
- 2 tablespoons barbecue sauce

1 Prepare Bourbon Caramelized Onions. Over medium-high heat, heat large nonstick skillet or fire up grill.
2 Season burger with seasoning blend. Grill, broil or pan-fry burger until internal temperature reaches 160°F.
3 While burger is cooking, heat bacon and Bourbon Caramelized Onions. Place cheese on top of burger to melt. Slice bun in half and toast on grill or broiler.
4 Place bacon and barbecue sauce on top of cheese. Place Bourbon Caramelized Onions on bun, then top with burger. Place remaining half of bun on burger. Yields 1 serving.

BOURBON CARAMELIZED ONIONS:

- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon butter
- 1 small yellow onion, sliced
- 1 teaspoon brown sugar
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- 1 shot bourbon*, optional

1 Heat vegetable oil in sauté pan over high heat. Add butter to pan and brown slightly. Add onions to pan and sear for about 1 to 2 minutes. Add brown sugar and salt. Stir well and continue cooking for approximately 10 minutes, or until onions are light brown, stirring constantly to prevent burning.
2 When onions began to caramelize, add bourbon. Continue cooking until all liquid is cooked off and onions are a nice brown color. Yields 4 servings.
*For regular caramelized onions, omit bourbon.

VEGETARIAN PORTOBELLO BURGERS

Portobello mushrooms are an efficient and tasty way to please everybody in the family or at a party. Vegetarians can eat this mushroom as a burger, and meat-eaters love the mushroom on their meat patties. My friend Jennifer adapted this recipe from *Cook This, Not That! Kitchen Survival Guide*.

- Red Pepper Mayonnaise, recipe follows
- Portobello caps
- Olive oil
- Balsamic vinegar
- Italian seasoning, to taste
- Salt and pepper
- Mozzarella cheese slices
- Red onion slices, optional
- Hamburger buns, toasted
- Mixed greens

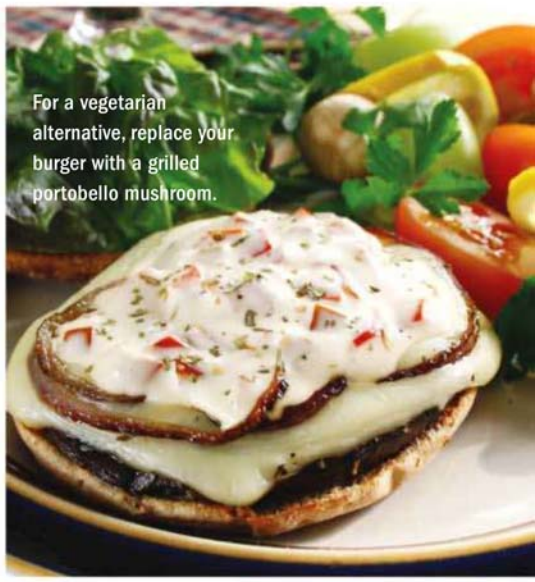
1 Prepare Red Pepper Mayonnaise; set aside for flavors to blend.
2 Over medium-high heat, heat large nonstick skillet or fire up grill.
3 Rub portobello caps with olive oil, balsamic vinegar, Italian seasoning, salt and pepper. Grill 2 to 3 minutes, then flip. Immediately add cheese and grill until cheese melts. Grill some red onion slices to add to burger.
4 Each burger should have a bun, a handful of mixed greens, grilled onions, portobello and Red Pepper Mayonnaise.

RED PEPPER MAYONNAISE:

- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup chopped roasted red peppers
- 1 clove garlic, crushed

1 Mix all ingredients well.

WWW.GRIT.COM Pat out a few more burger recipes for your backyard grill.


For a vegetarian alternative, replace your burger with a grilled portobello mushroom.

RESOURCES

For spices and seasoning blends, check out these companies:

Frontier Natural Products Co-op
P.O. Box 299
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Norway, IA 52318
800-669-3275
www.FrontierCoop.com

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Mountain Rose Herbs
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Eugene, OR 97405
800-879-3337
www.MountainRoseHerbs.com

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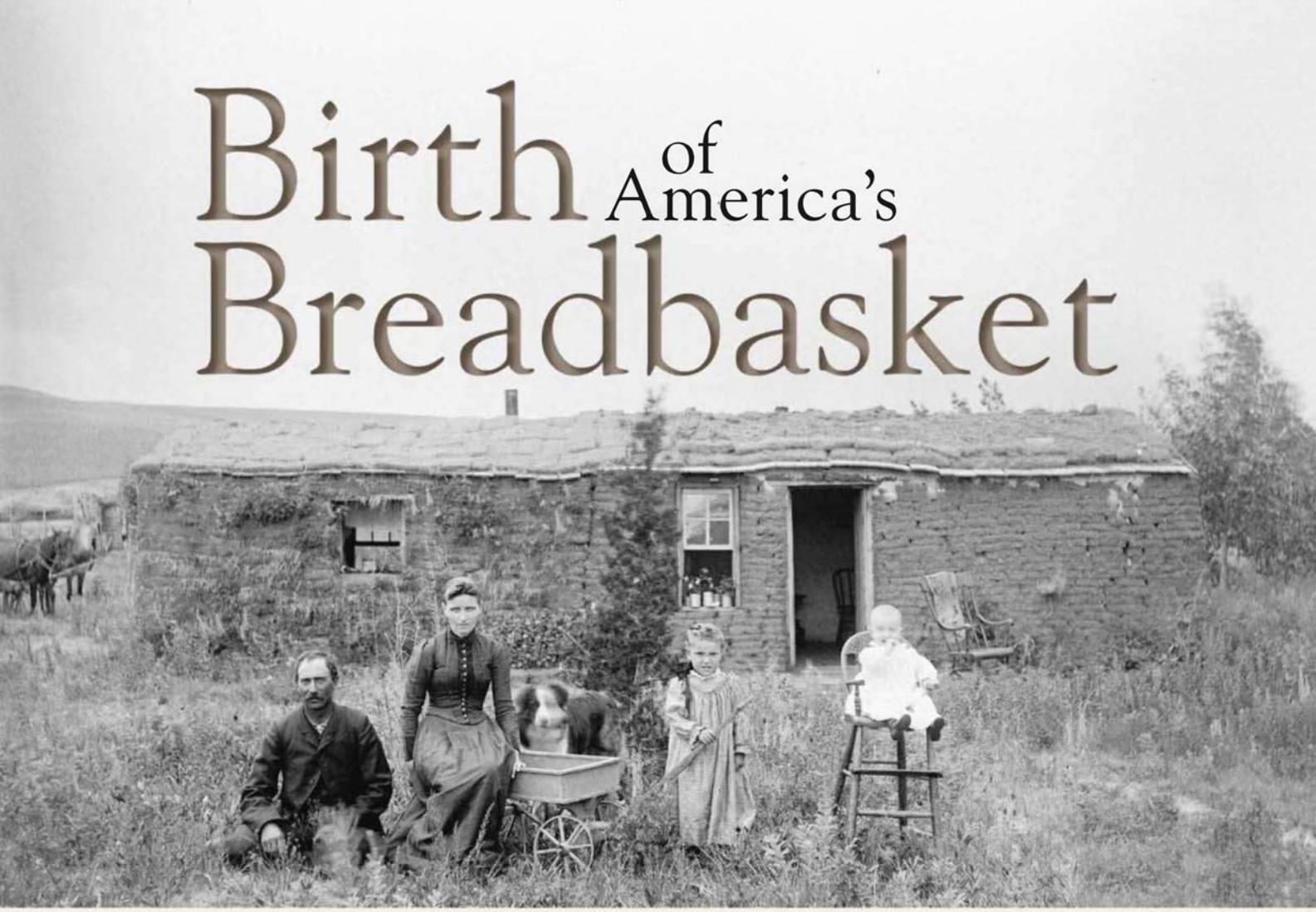
Birth of America's Breadbasket



Solomon Butcher/Nebraska State Historical Society RG2608.PH1675

Homesteaders braved myriad obstacles to settle the rural areas of the United States, and their descendants appreciate the effort.

By Jerry Schleicher

Most of the 33 million schoolchildren in this country today have never set foot on a farm. In fact, only two of every 100 Americans now live on a farm, and less than 1 percent of the 300 million people in our country claim farming as their occupation.

But many of us can trace our heritage to parents, grandparents or great-grandparents who spent their lives on a farm. About 93 million Americans living today are the descendants of homesteaders who filed claims under the Homestead Act, according to historians at the Homestead National Monument of America, located near Beatrice, Nebraska.

My wife and I are among them. My maternal grandfather left his boyhood home near Springfield, Illinois, in the early 1900s to homestead 160 acres of prairie in western Nebraska. My wife's great-grandfather brought his family to the United States from Germany in the 1880s to claim a homestead in northeastern Nebraska. Her grandfather later claimed his own homestead in South Dakota.

'Free land!'

Beginning in 1863, the words "free land" became a siren call for landless U.S. citizens, freed slaves and hundreds of thousands of European immigrants after

President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act. The act, which offered 160 acres of land to any qualified homesteader who paid a modest filing fee, built a home, planted at least 10 acres of crops and remained on his or her claim for at least five years, has been called the most important act ever passed for the benefit of the American people. It ultimately helped create the most productive agricultural economy the world has ever seen.

The lure of free land prompted millions of Europeans to immigrate to the United States in the years following the Civil War. Some left their homelands because of crop failures and economic depression. Others sought political and religious freedom, or to escape constant warfare. They came from Germany and Czechoslovakia, from Sweden and Norway, from England and Russia.

Between 1870 and 1900, more than two million immigrants had settled on the Great Plains. You can still find their descendants living in places like Denmark, Kansas; Bruno, Nebraska; New Holland, South Dakota; Bismarck, North Dakota; and Glasgow, Montana.

Soddies, locusts and molasses

Drive through the rural United States today, and you'll see tidy farmsteads with neatly painted homes, grain bins, barns and equipment sheds. Lush fields of corn and soybeans thrive under sprinkler irrigation systems, and cattle grow fat in pastures and feedlots. But imagine that same countryside a century or more ago, when homesteaders made the arduous journey west in a horse-drawn wagon.

Once they arrived at their destinations, the first obstacle they faced was to build a home. In forested states, plentiful trees could be cut to build a cabin. But as the agricultural frontier advanced into the vast, treeless tracts of the western High Plains, settlers were forced to make do with the resources at hand. And that often meant building a "soddie" from plowed strips of buffalo grass, or excavating a dugout in the side of a hill.

Sometimes homes were built one stage at a time. When she was small, my mother and her family lived for a time in a "basement house," a single room excavated from the ground and covered with a temporary roof until the cash was available to complete the aboveground part of the house.

New homesteaders quickly discovered it was back-breaking work to 'bust' the native sod with a walking plow hitched behind a team of oxen or horses. And after the fields had been plowed and planted, settlers still faced the perils of drought, hailstorms, prairie fires, blizzards, relentless wind and swarms of locusts.

Solomon Butcher/Nebraska State Historical Society RG2608.PH1766

ABOVE: The Leon Daily sod house near Milburn, Custer County, Nebraska. OPPOSITE: A homestead and family west of Callaway, Nebraska, between 1886 and 1912.

Most early settlers planted corn. Settlers in Kansas soon discovered that sorghum was better adapted to an arid climate. Eventually, many farms across the High Plains would be planted to hard red winter wheat.

270 million acres

The hardships and loneliness of prairie life proved too much for many homesteaders, and about 60 percent of approximately two million claims made under the Homestead Act were abandoned. Still, some 783,000 claims totaling 270 million acres were successfully "proved up." They included 151,600 homesteads in Montana; more than 118,000 in North Dakota; approximately 100,000 each in the states of Colorado, Nebraska, Oklahoma and South Dakota; and nearly 90,000 in Kansas. Hundreds of thousands of additional homesteads were claimed in states reaching from Alabama to California, from Arizona to Alaska.

The homesteaders who struggled to survive a century ago would scarcely recognize the agricultural powerhouse our country has become. Farmers in the United States each year now produce more than $200 billion of cattle, hogs, poultry and eggs, grains, fruit, vegetables, and dairy products.

The Homestead National Monument of America is located on the original homestead claim of Daniel Freeman, who filed his claim January 1, 1863, and is considered America's first homesteader. The monument is open to visitors and includes an 1867 cabin and a school built in 1872. It is located west of Beatrice, about 40 miles south of the state capital of Lincoln.

Jerry Schleicher is a country writer and cowboy poet in Parkville, Missouri, with strong country roots.

Turn to Page 86 for ordering information on the 10-book set of *My Folks* titles, gleaned from Grit and Capper's reader contributions.

SEEKING SOD-COVERED STORIES

Does your family tree include homesteading relatives? If so, please tell us their tale and send photos if you have them. Send stories by e-mail, with Homestead Stories in the subject line, to Jean Teller, *jteller@Grit.com*; send images one at a time, jpgs or tifs at 300 dpi.

www.Grit.com Read more of Jerry Schleicher's unique perspective on rural life.

Sweet Treat Wins It All

A simple dessert created by a New Jersey woman comes out on top at the 44th Pillsbury Bake-Off.

By Jean Teller

TAKE A SUGAR COOKIE, add chocolate, nuts, jam and ice cream, top with a fresh raspberry, and what do you have? Mini Ice Cream Cookie Cups, the grand prize winner for the 44th Pillsbury Bake-Off Contest.

Sue Compton, a single mother from Delanco, New Jersey, won the Sweet Treats category, with its $5,000 purse, in the biennial contest. Then she took home the top prize of $1 million, a GE Profile Induction Free-Standing Range and $7,000 worth of GE Profile kitchen appliances.

Compton calls the cookie cups simple and elegant, which she says makes them appealing to everyone. Contest judges were particularly complimentary of her creation.

"This recipe didn't include many ingredients, but they were combined in the most imaginative way possible," says Pillsbury Bake-Off Contest judge Jonell Nash, a food industry consultant and former food editor of *Essence* magazine.

"Easy to serve and still original enough to impress, this is a dessert recipe you can prepare the night before," says Jeff Houck, food editor for *The Tampa Tribune*. "Nobody will know how simple it was, and you'll still be the hit of the party." Houck also described the dish as the "perfect portion size," while fellow judge Carolyn Jung of Foodgal.com raved about the "souped-up, ice cream-cone cookie."

In the other three main categories of the Bake-Off, Niki Plourde of Gardner, Massachusetts, took the top prize in Breakfast and Brunches with her Tomato-Basil Eggs Alfredo in Bread Baskets; Evelyn Henderson, Roseville, California, won the Entertaining Appetizers category with her Salmon Pecan-Crusted Tartlets; and Zesty Lime-Fish Tacos, created by Kellie White of St. Louis, was the top dish in the Dinner Made Easy category.

Delicious and deceptively simple to make, Mini Ice Cream Cookie Cups took top honors at the 2010 Pillsbury Bake-Off.

COURTESY PILLSBURY BAKE-OFF® CONTEST (7)

Three other contestants were awarded prizes. Lenore Klass, Koloa, Hawaii, won the Jif Peanut Butter Award with her Banana-Peanut Butter Cream Tart. The award focused on recipes that used at least ¼ cup of Jif Peanut Butter.

Laura Stanke, Maple Grove, Minnesota, had her Pepperoni-Pesto Popovers singled out as the winner of the GE Imagination at Work Award, a prize given to the recipe deemed the most innovative. Heather Halonie, Webster, Wisconsin, took home the prize for the Crisco Is Cooking award with her Turkey Club Sandwich Ring with Avocado Aioli, which was deemed the best recipe using at least one tablespoon of the cooking oil. For their recipes, check our website.

One hundred contestants, representing 36 states, took part in the internationally known contest held this year in Orlando, Florida. The category winners were announced April 13, with the grand prize winner announced April 14 on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.

The Pillsbury Bake-Off Contest originated in 1949, with the first competition at the

WWW.GRIT.COM Check for more Pillsbury Bake-Off recipes, from 2010 and 2008.

Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City. The contest was held annually from 1949 to 1976, when it switched to an every-other-year schedule. The $1 million grand prize was first awarded in 1996 in Dallas, to Kurt Wait, who was also the first man to win top honors in the contest.

Senior Associate Editor Jean Teller attended her first Pillsbury Bake-Off in 1998, which also took place in Orlando. Several of this year's winners will quickly find their way into her recipe collection.

Sue Compton celebrates after her Pillsbury Bake-Off grand prize win was announced by Oprah Winfrey on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.

MINI ICE CREAM COOKIE CUPS

Grand Prize Winner
Sweet Treats, Category Winner
Sue Compton, Delanco, New Jersey

The easy, make-ahead recipe is a fun and impressive dessert for your next gathering.

Prep Time: 20 minutes
Start to Finish: 45 minutes

- 1 package (16 ounces) Pillsbury Ready to Bake refrigerated sugar cookies (24 cookies)
- 4 teaspoons sugar, divided
- ⅓ cup Fisher Chef's Naturals Chopped Walnuts, finely chopped
- ½ cup Hershey's semi-sweet chocolate baking chips
- ¼ cup Smucker's Seedless Red Raspberry Jam, divided
- 1½ cups vanilla bean ice cream, softened
- 24 fresh raspberries

1 Heat oven to 350°F. Spray 24 mini muffin cups with Crisco Original No-Stick Cooking Spray. Place 1 cookie dough round in each muffin cup. Bake 15 to 20 minutes, or until golden brown.

2 Place 2 teaspoons sugar in small bowl. Dip end of wooden spoon handle in sugar; carefully press into center of each cookie to make 1-inch-wide indentation. Cool completely in pan, about 20 minutes.

3 Meanwhile, in small bowl, mix walnuts and remaining 2 teaspoons sugar; set aside. In small microwavable bowl, microwave chocolate chips uncovered on high 30 to 60 seconds, stirring after 30 seconds, until smooth.

4 Run knife around edges of cups to loosen; gently remove from pan. Dip rim of each cup into melted chocolate, then into walnut mixture. Place walnut-side-up on cookie sheet with sides.

5 In another small, microwavable bowl, microwave jam uncovered on high about 15 seconds until melted. Spoon ½ teaspoon jam into each cup. Freeze cups about 5 minutes, or until chocolate is set.

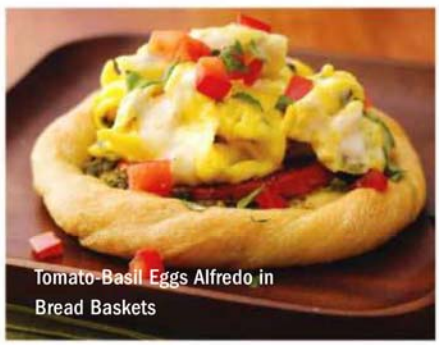
6 Spoon ice cream into cups, using small cookie scoop or measuring tablespoon. Top each cup with fresh raspberry. Store in freezer; let stand at room temperature 5 minutes before serving. Yields 24 tartlets.

1 Serving: Calories 150 (Calories from Fat 70); Total Fat 7g (Saturated Fat 2½g, Trans Fat 1½g); Cholesterol 0mg; Sodium 60mg; Total Carbohydrate 19g (Dietary Fiber 0g, Sugars 12g); Protein 1g / Percent Daily Value*: Vitamin A 0%; Vitamin C 0%; Calcium 0%; Iron 2% / Exchanges: 1½ Other Carbohydrate; 0 Vegetable; 1½ Fat / Carbohydrate Choices: 1
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

TOMATO-BASIL EGGS ALFREDO IN BREAD BASKETS

Breakfast & Brunches, Category Winner
Niki Plourde, Gardner, Massachusetts

Pillsbury refrigerated breadsticks make individual bread baskets that are filled with delicious pesto, tomato and egg mixture for a complete breakfast in an edible bowl.



Tomato-Basil Eggs Alfredo in Bread Baskets

Prep Time: 25 minutes
Start to Finish: 25 minutes

- 1 medium tomato
- 1 can (11 ounces) Pillsbury refrigerated original breadsticks (12 breadsticks)
- ¼ cup basil pesto, divided
- ⅜ teaspoon salt, divided
- ⅛ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 6 Eggland's Best eggs
- 2 tablespoons half-and-half or milk
- 1½ tablespoons chopped fresh basil leaves, divided
- 2 tablespoons Land O'Lakes Unsalted or Salted Butter
- ⅓ cup alfredo pasta sauce (from 16-ounce jar)

1 Heat oven to 375°F. Spray large cookie sheet with Crisco Original No-Stick Cooking Spray.

2 Cut 6 thin slices from tomato; finely dice remaining tomato for garnish. Set aside. Unroll dough; separate into 12 breadsticks. Shape 6 breadsticks each into a coil; place

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Surprised by the Pillsbury Doughboy, contestant Tony Fusaro Jr. continues to work on his dish during the 44th Pillsbury Bake-Off Contest in Orlando, Florida.

2 inches apart on cookie sheet. Starting at center, press out each coil into 3½-inch round. Twist remaining breadsticks; wrap 1 twisted breadstick around edge of each round to make ½-inch rim; press edges to seal.

3 Spread 1 rounded teaspoon pesto in bottom of each round; top with tomato slice. Sprinkle with ¼ teaspoon salt and pepper. Bake 10 to 15 minutes, or until edges are golden brown.

4 Meanwhile, in medium bowl, beat eggs and half-and-half with wire whisk until well-blended. Add ⅛ teaspoon salt. Stir in 1 tablespoon basil.

5 Heat 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat. Melt butter in skillet; add egg mixture. Cook 4 minutes, gently lifting cooked portions with spatula so that thin, uncooked portion can flow to bottom, until eggs are thickened, but still slightly moist. Stir in pasta sauce.

6 Divide egg mixture evenly among bread baskets. Garnish with diced tomato and remaining ½ tablespoon basil. Yields 6 servings.

1 Serving: Calories 350 (Calories from Fat 190); Total Fat 21g (Saturated Fat 8g, Trans Fat 0g); Cholesterol 200mg; Sodium 710mg; Total Carbohydrate 28g (Dietary Fiber 0g, Sugars 4g); Protein 12g / Percent Daily Value*: Vitamin A 10%; Vitamin C 2%; Calcium 8%; Iron 8% / Exchanges: 2 Starch; 0 Other Carbohydrate; 0 Vegetable; 1 Lean Meat; 3 Fat / Carbohydrate Choices: 2

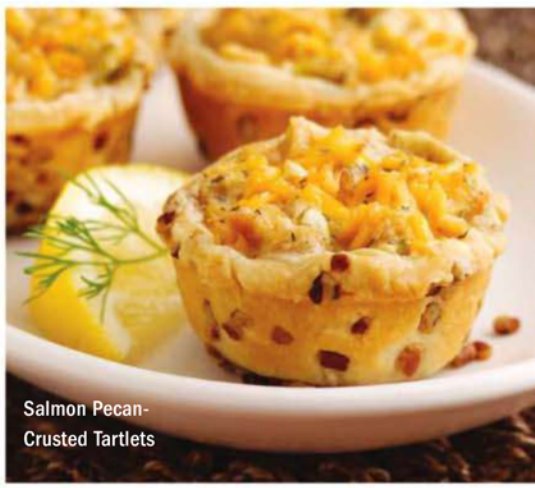
SALMON PECAN-CRUSTED TARTLETS

Entertaining Appetizers, Category Winner
Evelyn Henderson, Roseville, California

Convenient Pillsbury refrigerated pie crust makes easy, elegant, salmon-filled appetizers that are perfect for any occasion.

Prep Time: 30 minutes
Start to Finish: 1 hour

- 1 can (6 ounces) premium skinless boneless pink salmon, drained
- ¼ cup finely chopped dill pickle
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped onion
- ⅓ cup mayonnaise or salad dressing
- ½ cup shredded mild cheddar cheese



Salmon Pecan-Crusted Tartlets

- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon dried dill weed
- 1 box Pillsbury refrigerated pie crusts, softened as directed on box
- ⅓ cup Fisher Chef's Naturals Pecan Cookie Pieces or Fisher Chef's Naturals Chopped Pecans, finely chopped, divided
- 1 package (3 ounces) cream cheese, softened, divided
- 1 dill weed sprig
- 2 lemon wedges

1 In large bowl, mix salmon, pickle, onion, mayonnaise, cheese, lemon juice and ½ teaspoon dill weed. Refrigerate.

2 Heat oven to 400°F.

3 On work surface, unroll 1 pie crust. Sprinkle half the pecans over crust; gently press into crust. Cut with 3-inch round cookie cutter into 10 rounds. In ungreased, nonstick mini muffin pan, gently press each round, pecan-side-down, on bottom and up side of muffin cup, folding edge under and rounding to shape. Repeat with remaining crust.

4 Spoon 1 teaspoon cream cheese into bottom of each cup. Spoon 1 rounded tablespoon salmon mixture on top of cream cheese in each cup.

5 Bake 12 to 18 minutes, or until crust is golden brown. Cool in pan on cooling rack 5 minutes. Remove from pan to serving platter; cool 5 minutes. Garnish platter with dill weed sprig and lemon wedges. Serve warm. Yields 20 tartlets.

1 Serving: Calories 160 (Calories from Fat 110); Total Fat 12g (Saturated Fat 4g, Trans Fat 0g); Cholesterol 15mg; Sodium 200mg; Total Carbohydrate 10g (Dietary Fiber 0g, Sugars 0g); Protein 2g / Percent Daily Value*: Vitamin A 2%; Vitamin C 0%; Calcium 4%; Iron 0% / Exchanges: ½ Starch; 0 Other Carbohydrate; 0 Vegetable; 2 ½ Fat / Carbohydrate Choices: ½

ZESTY LIME-FISH TACOS

Dinner Made Easy, Category Winner
Kellie White, St. Louis

Fresh Pillsbury Grands! biscuits fold around seasoned fish fillets topped with kicky salsa in this recipe that makes an easy gourmet meal in less than an hour.

Zesty Lime-Fish Tacos

Prep Time: 40 minutes
Start to Finish: 40 minutes

- 1 pound tilapia fillets (about 4)
- ½ cup fresh lime juice (2 to 3 limes), divided
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- ¼ cup Pillsbury Best All Purpose Flour
- ¼ cup yellow cornmeal
- 1 can (16.3 ounces) Pillsbury Grands Homestyle refrigerated buttermilk biscuits (8 biscuits)
- 6 tablespoons Crisco Pure Canola Oil, divided
- 1½ tablespoons chipotle chiles in adobo sauce (from 7-ounce can), finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ½ cup salsa
- ½ cup sour cream
- 1½ cups shredded cabbage

1 Heat oven to 200°F. Cut each fish fillet lengthwise into 4 strips. In shallow glass dish, mix 7 tablespoons lime juice and garlic. Add fish; turn to coat. Let stand while preparing biscuits.

2 On work surface, mix flour and cornmeal. Separate dough into 8 biscuits. Press both sides of each biscuit into flour mixture, then press or roll into 6- to 7-inch round.

3 In 12-inch nonstick skillet, heat 1½ tablespoons oil over medium heat. Add 2 biscuit rounds; cook about 1 minute on each side, or until golden brown and cooked through. Place on cookie sheet; keep warm in oven. Cook remaining rounds, adding 1½ tablespoons oil to skillet for each batch. Wipe skillet clean.

Banana-Peanut Butter Cream Tart

4 Heat same skillet over medium-high heat. Add fish and lime juice mixture, chiles, salt and pepper; cook about 5 minutes, turning fish once, until fish flakes easily with fork. In small bowl, mix salsa, sour cream and remaining 1 tablespoon lime juice.

5 Using slotted spoon, remove fish and divide evenly among biscuit rounds. Top each with cabbage and 1 to 2 tablespoons salsa mixture. Fold biscuit rounds in half over filling. Serve with any remaining salsa mixture. Garnish with lime wedges, if desired. Yields 8 tacos.

1 Serving: Calories 400 (Calories from Fat 200); Total Fat 22g (Saturated Fat 4½g, Trans Fat 2g); Cholesterol 40mg; Sodium 860mg; Total Carbohydrate 35g (Dietary Fiber 1g, Sugars 6g); Protein 15g / Percent Daily Value*: Vitamin A 4%; Vitamin C 6%; Calcium 4%; Iron 10% / Exchanges: 2 Starch; ½ Other Carbohydrate; 0 Vegetable; 1½ Lean Meat; 3 Fat / Carbohydrate Choices: 2

BANANA-PEANUT BUTTER CREAM TART

Jif Peanut Butter Award, $5,000 Prize

Lenore Klass, Koloa, Hawaii

Peanut butter and bananas are together again, this time in a dreamy cream pie.

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Start to Finish: 1 hour, 55 minutes

- **1** Pillsbury refrigerated pie crust, softened as directed on box
- **6** tablespoons Land O'Lakes Butter, softened

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- 1 package (3 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- ⅓ cup Jif Creamy Peanut Butter
- ½ teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups confectioner's sugar
- 1½ cups firm, ripe banana slices, ¼-inch thick (about 2 medium)
- 1 cup whipping cream
- ¼ cup Fisher Party Peanuts, finely chopped

1 Heat oven to 450°F. Unroll pie crust; place in ungreased 9- or 9½-inch tart pan with removable bottom. Press crust firmly against bottom and side of pan; fold excess crust over and gently press into side of pan to make double thickness. Prick bottom of crust with fork several times. Bake 9 to 11 minutes, or until golden brown. Cool completely, about 25 minutes.

2 In medium bowl, beat butter, cream cheese, peanut butter and vanilla with electric mixer on medium speed until well-blended. Gradually add confectioner's sugar, beating until smooth and creamy. Spread peanut butter filling in tart shell, building up side 1 inch and leaving shallow indentation in center of filling. Fill indentation with bananas; gently press into filling.

3 In small bowl, beat whipping cream on high speed until soft peaks form (do not overbeat). Spread whipped cream over filling and bananas. Sprinkle peanuts around edge of tart. Refrigerate 1 hour, or until chilled. Store covered in refrigerator. Yields 8 servings.

1 Serving: Calories 550 (Calories from Fat 320); Total Fat 35g (Saturated Fat 18g, Trans Fat 1g); Cholesterol 70mg; Sodium 300mg; Total Carbohydrate 52g (Dietary Fiber 2g, Sugars 35g); Protein 5g / Percent Daily Value*: Vitamin A 15%; Vitamin C 2%; Calcium 4%; Iron 2% / Exchanges: ½ Starch; 3 Other Carbohydrate; 0 Vegetable; ½ High-Fat Meat; 6 Fat / Carbohydrate Choices: 3½

HELP WANTED:

■ Donna Kellner, Garden Grove, California, writes, "A local restaurant serves a sweet and sour cabbage soup that has shredded roast beef as one of the ingredients. I wonder if any readers have a recipe for this tasty soup."

■ Dorthy Williams, Salina, Oklahoma, has lost her recipe for Zucchini Pickles. She says the zucchini was cut in small squares, green food coloring was added, and the pickles turned out very sweet.

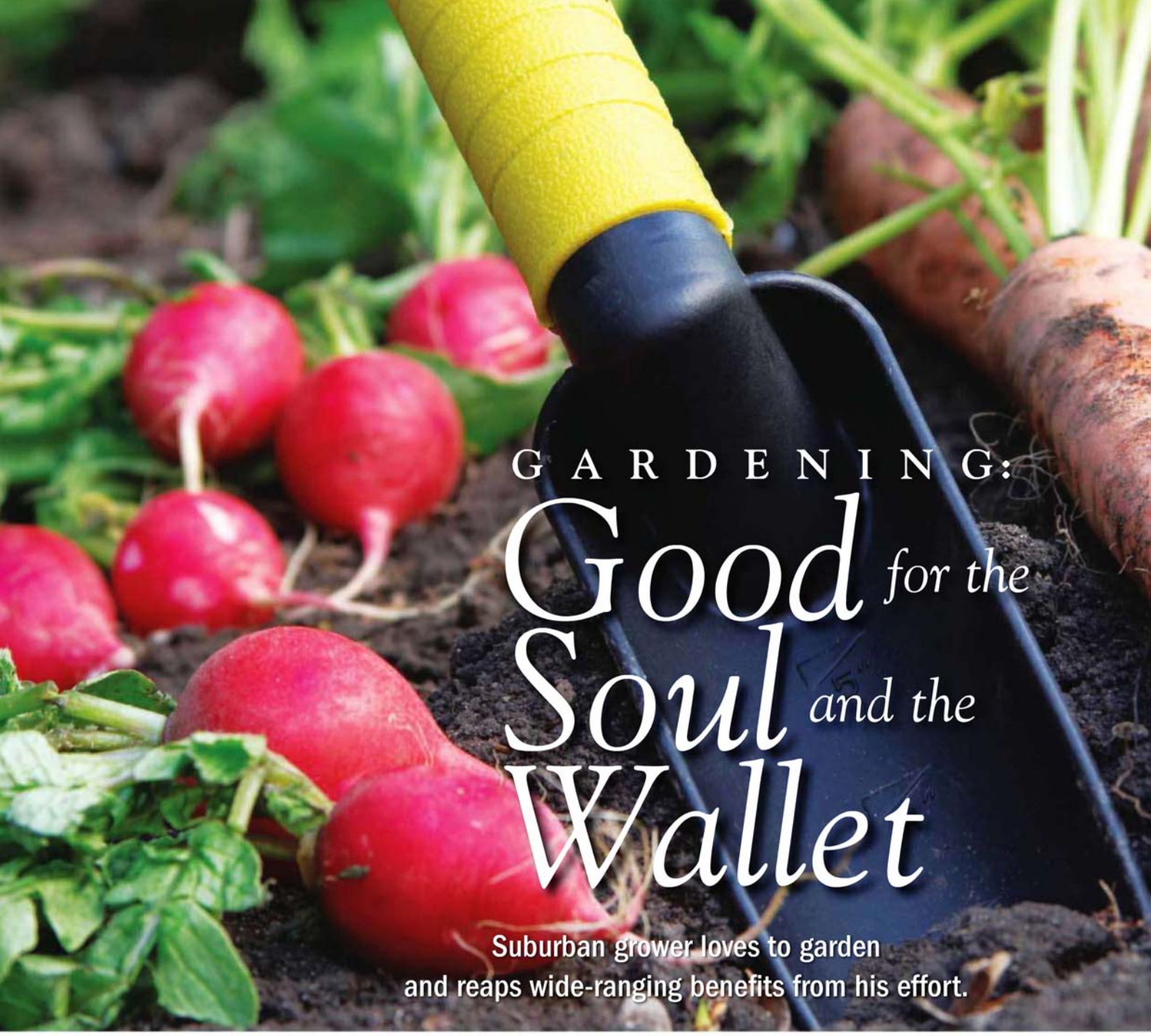
■ Gretchen Brei, Muscatine, Iowa, hopes to find a doughnut recipe that she used to make when her children were young. She writes, "I could mix up the dough and have doughnuts done by the time they got home from school. I remember I used baking powder or soda to give a quick start, and I think they started with two cakes of yeast." Can anyone help?

■ Helen Thompson, Bucyrus, Ohio, is looking for recipes for whoopie pie. She'd like different flavors, particularly peanut butter.

■ Jeanne Scott, Port Hueneme, California, is looking for a meatloaf recipe that was published in *Mother Earth News* back in the early 1980s. It could be sliced and served cold in a sandwich. She also would like to find recipes for fried chicken similar to Colonel Sanders' secret recipe for KFC.

■ Marian Zick, Roberts, Illinois, is looking for a recipe for French bread to make garlic bread. She'd like the recipe to include a little white flour and more of a whole-grain flour, like whole wheat, bran, flax or sesame seed.

If you've been looking for a long-lost recipe, or can provide one, please write to Recipe Box, c/o Grit, 1503 S.W. 42nd St., Topeka, KS 66609 or e-mail us at RecipeBox@Grit.com. Please include your name, address and daytime phone. Recipes cannot be returned, as they are eventually sent to the person requesting the recipe. Recipe requests and responses will be printed at our discretion and as space allows. Addresses are not printed to allow Grit the opportunity to publish recipes before sending them on to the requesting party.



GARDENING: Good for the Soul and the Wallet

Suburban grower loves to garden and reaps wide-ranging benefits from his effort.

By Paul Gardener

I I love home vegetable gardens. It's a simple enough thing to say, but I really, really love home vegetable gardens! The simple act of placing a seed in fertile soil, watering it and harvesting its fruits is almost a personal revolution. It's a way of declaring my independence and providing healthful, fresh food for my family. And I always assume we save some money, but just how much?

When Grit Editor Hank Will posed this question, I didn't have an answer. I live in the suburbs and cultivate food on most of my quarter-acre lot. I was certain that my family ate better with less expense because of our gardening efforts, but I never actually did the math. So I decided to make the calculations and give Hank an honest answer. Here goes.

Building the spreadsheet

A few years back when we moved to our new home, I had the opportunity to start a garden from scratch. The soil I was stuck with was soil only in the sense that it was on the surface of the Earth, and it had things growing in it – lots of weeds. Because of that, I decided to build my garden in raised beds. I could have purchased wood, but because of all the construction around me, I was able to get a lot of scrap 2-by-6s for free. It took more time, but the cost savings was worth it to me; making calculated decisions should always be a part of the garden, whether it's buying supplies or deciding when to plant.

For my planting medium, I went with a soilless mix. Each of my five 4-by-6 raised beds was started with a mix of ⅓ each compost, peat and vermiculite. Buying all that growing medium and the hardware to build my beds cost me nearly $200 – it would have been substantially more without the free 2-by-6s.

Running the numbers

Since that first year, my garden has grown quite a bit. With each new raised bed, both in the backyard and front, more costs were incurred. I tend to be a pretty good salvager, so much of the growth has been from recycled materials, but not all. That means more costs. I did stop making my own soilless mix, for the most part because of what it costs, but truckloads of compost at $30 a load add up, as do the organic fertilizers I use. I would guess generously that I spend about $200 to $300 per year in garden-related materials and have put close to $1,200 overall into building my garden, including raised beds, soil and drip irrigation. I could have spent much more, but honestly I could have spent less, as well. Again, it's all about choices. And what do I get for that investment? What I get is so much more than what I put in that I hardly can quantify it accurately.

Before I try to put monetary value on it, I have to explain why I garden. I'm not a farmer, much as I may

What tastes better than sun-kissed tomatoes fresh from the vine?

Photo: iStockphoto.com/Kerstin Potthoff

Plant potatoes and more to keep your grocery bill low.

Photo: iStockphoto.com/Johnny Scriv

Produce fresh from your garden tastes great and satisfies more than your appetite.

Photo: iStockphoto.com/Steve Cole

OPPOSITE: Digging in the soil is good for your wallet, as well as your physical and emotional well-being.

Photo: iStockphoto.com/Jim Jurica

A raised bed, stuffed with vegetables, helps everyone with rising food costs.

Photo: iStockphoto.com/Chris Price

OPPOSITE: Teach your children the joys of gardening and the wonders of producing their own food.

Photo: iStockphoto.com/Chris Price

fancy myself one, so I don't do it for the money. I'm also not in a remote location with limited access to fresh vegetables, nor am I in such financial hard times that I need a garden. I garden for my peace of mind, and because I love good food. My time in the garden, connected so closely to the soil, gives me perspective on the rest of my life. Such a basic pleasure is gained from the act of sowing seed and harvesting fruit that I truly believe gardeners will outlive their non-gardening counterparts, or at the very least more enjoy their time on Earth.

All philosophical reasons aside, a practical way to calculate the gain from one's garden is with cold, hard numbers. And I happen to have those numbers.

Entries for the ledger

I keep a journal of the work I put into my garden and of the harvests I get from it. The total area of my garden is nearly 800 square feet. Last year, I harvested 810 pounds of food from it; not roughly 810 pounds, but 810 pounds in the fridge, freezer and cellar.

While it was our largest year-end total to date, it was actually a poor harvest year for us overall. Our green beans nearly all died of rust, and squash bugs all but decimated our squash and pumpkin crops. Yet, even with those setbacks, we were able to get quite a bit of food canned and stored, and we ate the freshest organic foods possible from our garden all summer and into the fall.

I checked my journal for this article and tallied up the totals per crop as best I could, and for each of those crops I researched what it would have cost to buy them. Some specialty items that I grow, I couldn't find pricing for, so they were omitted from the analysis. Also, the prices I used for comparison were from our local mega-mart and were probably the cheapest prices I could find for any of the foods. I didn't look for organic produce, locally grown products or any other more costly features because I wanted a realistic idea of what I am gaining from this whole exercise. The results surprised even me.

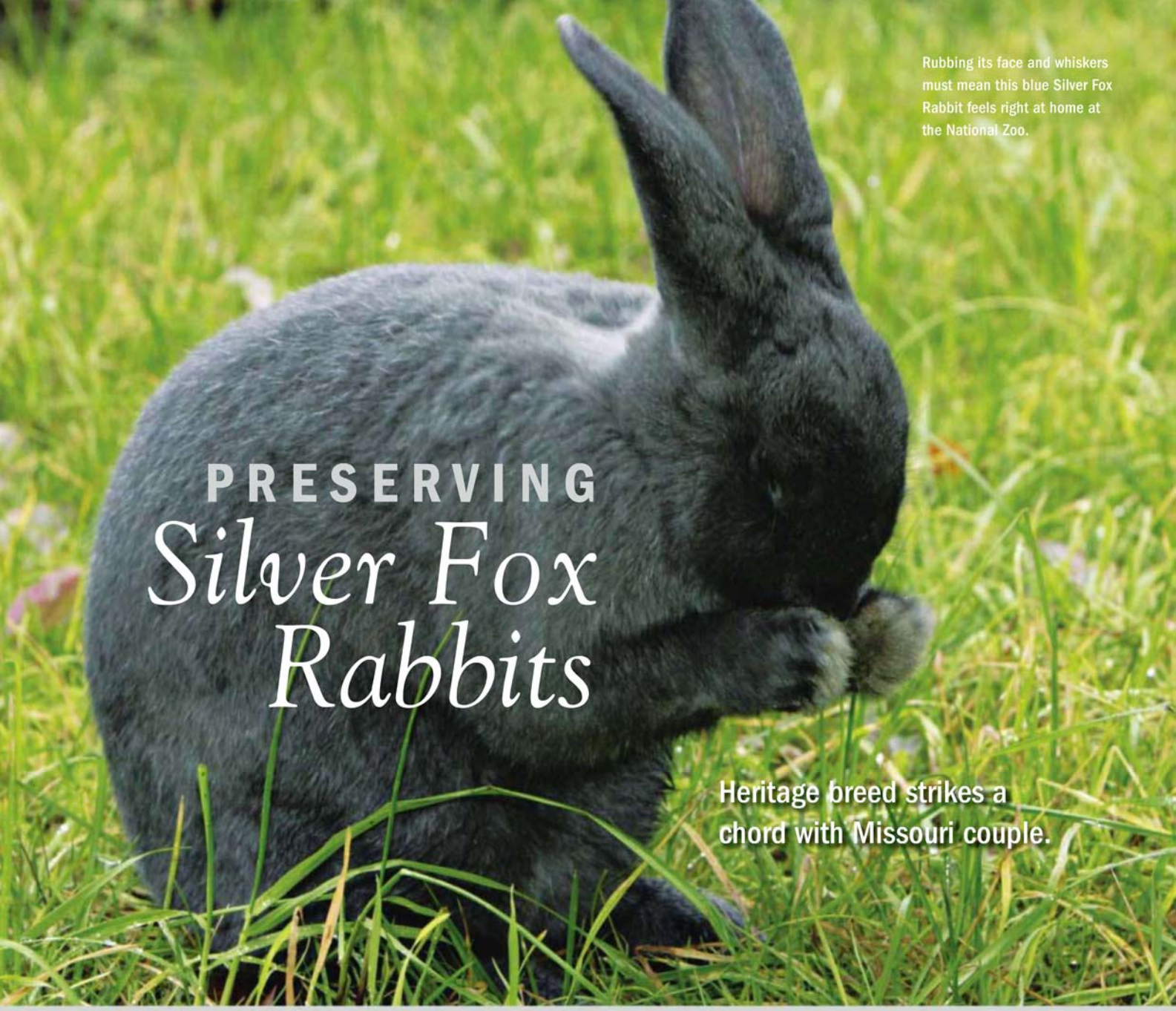
The bottom line

In produce alone, from just one year, I would have had to buy $1,470 worth of food. If I count the finished and canned foods that we stored, the tally bumps up to almost $1,550. If I had sold this one year's harvest, I would have broken even on everything I've put into establishing and maintaining the garden over the years. All harvests previous to this year would be considered profit over the top, as well as future harvests, less the soil expenses, any added structural changes,

seed costs, etc. What's more, if I had decided to compare pricing with organic equivalents, the totals would have been from $1,800 to more than $3,000. Not a bad return on my investment, I'd say.

If you add the obvious health benefits of eating fresh organic produce regularly, the weight-loss from all the physical work, and the stress relief it provides to a gardener every day, the real value of the effort is much higher. Not to mention the legacy of eating fresh foods and the significance of appreciating what we've done, and what we can do, for ourselves that is passed on to our children. With all that, I think it's safe to say that a backyard vegetable garden is a landscape option that pays handsomely by delivering hundreds of pounds of good food, significant relief on the grocery budget, and improved mental and physical health.

Paul Gardener, a Grit blogger, and his family enjoy the fruits of their labor throughout most of the year at their suburban Utah home.



Rubbing its face and whiskers must mean this blue Silver Fox Rabbit feels right at home at the National Zoo.

PRESERVING *Silver Fox Rabbits*

Heritage breed strikes a chord with Missouri couple.

By Eric Tudor

When we decided to get into raising rabbits, it seemed logical to consider helping preserve a rare heritage breed at the same time. Our reasoning went something like this: Most likely, heritage rabbits will eat the same amount of food and take up the same amount of space as any other rabbit, so why not keep some classic genes alive? It turns out we were right, and with the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy's help, we were put on the path to preserving the Silver Fox, a rare rabbit breed, indeed.

The closest Silver Fox breeder we could find was in Wisconsin, and like many others, we were put on a "waiting list" for several months. We had decided upon a trio consisting of a buck and two does to start our breeding program.

After several months and a drive of a few hundred miles, we returned with our first Silver Fox Rabbits. Months later, the first litter of six kits arrived, and at that point we realized we had answered our calling to help preserve a magnificent, rare breed for future generations. It has been nonstop showing, sharing and expanding ever since.

Saving the silver

Named for its coarse coat, the Silver Fox's 1½- to 2-inch-long fur stands up when stroked from tail to head. This so-called no-fly-back characteristic combined with white guard hairs causes the coat to resemble that of the Arctic Silver Fox. Once quite popular, the Silver Fox's current status is listed as critical by the ALBC, due to fewer than 200 registrations in the United States and a global population of fewer than 2,000.

The Silver Fox Rabbit was the second rabbit to be truly American-bred, with the first being the American Blue. What is known about Silver Fox origins is that the breed was developed in the 1920s by W.B. Garland of North Canton, Ohio. Garland had an unusual black Checkered Giant doe with a large number of white hairs scattered over her body, and it is believed that he initially bred this female with an English Silver buck. Garland's purpose was to develop a practical-sized breed that had the blocky shape and fur texture of the English Silver, but with flecks on the fur.

After many failed attempts, a successful mating occurred between an English Silver buck and the black Checkered Giant doe. From the first litter, the largest buck was bred back to his mother, and the largest does were bred back to their father. With about 40 hutches, and after 14 years of consistent culling, Garland had a rabbit that bred true to type and color and was the first rabbit of its day to dress out at a pound under its live weight.

Garland developed both the black and blue Silver Fox color types in this way. Bucks typically weigh 9 to 11 pounds, and does weigh between 10 and 12 pounds. The breed was accepted by the American Rabbit Breeders Association in 1925 as American Silver Giant, and the name was changed to the American Silver Fox in 1929.

TOP: A blue Silver Fox Rabbit explores its new home at the Smithsonian's National Zoo.

Photos: courtesy Meghan Murphy/ Smithsonian's National Zoo (2)

BOTTOM: Silver Fox Rabbit kits are barely a handful.

Photo: courtesy Eric Tudor

Road to Riverwind Farms

While we now also raise and show Flemish Giant and Giant Chinchilla Rabbits (another rare heritage breed), the Silver Fox is our primary breed. We expanded our rabbitry in 2009 by remodeling an existing 12-by-17-foot shed to accommodate 30 holes for our Silver Fox Rabbits. Other renovations included adding heat and air conditioning, which enable us to breed year-round. We experimented with various cage and nesting box designs, settling on a 2-by-3-foot cage that stands 18 inches tall, with drop pans lined with pine wood chips. (NOTE: Never use cedar chips, as they are poisonous to rabbits.)

Brooder pens are 2 feet deep, 5 feet long and 2 feet tall, and include a nest box with a roof that doubles as a second floor for the doe to take a break from nursing her kits. These pens offer the kits room to grow through weaning at eight weeks of age. Breeding generally

RESOURCES

For more information on the Silver Fox Rabbit, visit these websites:

NATIONAL SILVER FOX RABBIT CLUB YAHOO CHAT: *Tech.Groups.Yahoo.com/group/SilverFoxRabbitClub_NSFRC*

NSFRC on FACEBOOK: *www.Facebook.com* and search for National Silver Fox Rabbit Club

RIVERWIND RABBITRY & FARMS: *www.FreeWebs.com/riverwindrabbitry*

Nuzzling noses, these black Silver Fox Rabbits settle into their home at the Smithsonian's National Zoo.

Photo: courtesy Meghan Murphy/ Smithsonian's National Zoo

yields litters of six to eight kits. We have had litters as large as 13 and have successfully raised litters as large as 11 without any losses – proof that the Silver Fox is an exceptionally heavy milk producer. The Silver Fox has a gentle nature, loves attention and makes a wonderful mother. The breed is a logical choice for a child's pet and 4-H projects at all levels.

Animal husbandry

Silver Fox rabbits need feed containing 18 percent to 21 percent protein if you plan to compete in the show ring. Lower protein feeds are fine for producing meat. Plenty of fresh water and a good quality grass/hay mix are also recommended. Hay with high alfalfa content can irritate the sensitive digestive tract of rabbits, and therefore is not recommended.

A good venting system is a must for any rabbitry in order to control ammonia, which can be toxic for rabbits over time. Litter pans under the cages should be changed weekly with fresh wood chips. Water bottles need to be sanitized with a mild bleach solution every few months. Whenever bringing any new rabbit into your rabbitry, it's a good idea to conduct a two-week quarantine to monitor the rabbits for any signs of sickness, as well as to allow them to adapt to their new surroundings. Keep in mind, rabbits are creatures of habit, so any change in feed or cages, or any loud noises can stress your rabbits for several days.

When breeding, always remove the doe from her cage and place her in the buck's cage. If you reverse this, often the buck will be more interested in rubbing his chin (a rabbit's way of marking territory) on the new surroundings rather than focusing on the task at hand.

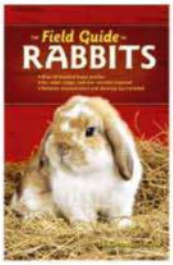
A doe is commonly bred when her previous litter is 6 weeks old, and there's no need to wait for a doe to go into heat. Rabbits do not ovulate on a regular cycle; mating will stimulate egg production.

Gestation time for the doe is approximately 31 days; a nest box should be placed in with the doe three days prior to the kindle (parturition) date. Our nest boxes are lined with two to three inches of pine wood chips and a healthy amount of fresh, non-dusty hay. For Silver Fox Rabbits, nest boxes should be approximately 18 to 20 inches in length, 10 to 12 inches wide and no less than 10 inches high, with a partial roof or "perch" for the doe to sit on if she chooses.

We have found wooden nest boxes work best, helping control temperature better than metal versions. When the time comes for your Silver Fox to kindle, you'll see a "rounded out" area within the wood chips, followed by the doe packing hay or straw in her mouth for nest building. Usually the doe will pull fur to line the nest before or shortly after kindling. Kits nurse only once or twice daily. A quick inspection of a healthy, nursing kit should reveal a "fat pot-belly" appearance, not severely wrinkled, which is a sign of dehydration.

If you would like to attend a rabbit show and learn more about the various breeds, as well as meet breeders, visit the American Rabbit Breeders Association's website at *www.ARBA.net*.

Eric Tudor has a passion for historical preservation and research. His small farm specializes in Standard Cochin chickens and Silver Fox, Giant Chinchilla and Flemish Giant rabbits. He and his wife, Sarah, have been married 20 years and have two children.



Turn to Page 86 for ordering information on *Storey's Guide to Raising Rabbits* by Bob Bennett and *The Field Guide to Rabbits* by Samantha Johnson.

www.Grit.com **Get advice from rabbit expert Bob Bennet in Get The Storey on Country Life blog.**

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Machine Maintenance Made Easy

Save money and time with routine equipment checks.

By Oscar H. Will III

You've been living that life out where the pavement ends now for a couple of years, and your machine shed is no longer empty. Daily life is a joy and, for the most part, pretty smooth, but now your tractor has sufficient hours to require service, the mower's cut is really ragged, and the tires on the utility vehicle go flat overnight. In some ways, it feels like the party's over – what can you do?

If you're used to taking your car to town for service every time it makes a new noise or the "oil change" light comes on, you might be tempted to drag the machines off to the local dealership for service. But when you pull the trailer out of the shed, you notice that two of the four tires are flat. You can't call AAA to bail you out, and hiring a hauler to come and get the equipment, or a mobile repair service to come and fix things at your place isn't in the budget.

If you haven't done so already, now is the time to take a good look at the service section of the machinery owner's manuals you have stashed away in your home office, grab some tools and face down those routine maintenance monsters that serve to add anxiety with every tick of the tractor's hour meter. Engage your machines more intimately, and you'll save yourself a ton of money, feel proud and enjoy knowing your equipment will go the distance.

Manuals make the magic

The first and arguably most important step to maintaining any piece of machinery is to obtain an owner's manual and read it cover to cover. If that manual lacks sufficient information for determining service intervals and specifications, spend a little money on a separate service manual. If you find yourself confused when reading the manual, you might also read a book or two covering the fundamentals of mechanics and general repair. Armed with printed materials and a sufficient tool kit, you can easily perform all the routine checks and adjustments required to keep your machines running safely and smoothly.

Fluid fun

Most machines with internal combustion engines will use fluid fuel – either gasoline or diesel fuel. Since you need to fill your fuel tank sufficient times to get to the point where other fluids might need your attention, we'll just ignore fuel for now – other than to say: Be careful handling it, and change and/or drain water from the fuel filter(s) as specified in the manual.

Other important fluids are required for keeping machine components cool, especially engines and transmissions. Lubricating oils sometimes serve double duty by carrying heat from moving parts to radiator-like heat exchangers, while water-based solutions, generally known as coolant or antifreeze, carry engine heat to an air-cooled radiator.

Lubricating oil is one general category of fluid you'll encounter with most machines – it's available in many formulations specific to transmissions, engines, gearboxes, drive axles and the like. Many machines found around the farm also require hydraulic fluid, which is designed to transfer mechanical energy efficiently using a moving column of liquid. Your tractor's loader uses hydraulic oil for power transmission. Your car's brake system also uses a special hydraulic fluid to connect your foot with the brake pads or shoes. In many cases, hydraulic fluid is used for power transmission, lubrication and even cooling.

When your rear-mounted shredder mower's manual indicates it's time to change the gearbox oil, you'll need to drain the old oil and fill with new. Draining can be as simple as removing the drain and fill plugs, letting the old oil flow out, replacing the drain plug, and pouring the specified oil through the fill port, until the oil just begins to drip out of the port. Replace the fill plug, and you're set. Changing virtually any machine's oil pretty much follows the same routine.

ABOVE: Checking electrical connections may be all you need to do to keep your farm vehicle on the go.

Photo: iStockphoto.com/Pattie Caify

LEFT: Always remember to check the oil.

Photo: iStockphoto.com/Iain Sarjeant

OPPOSITE: Rather than leaving a tractor to rust, perform regular maintenance so it can help around the farm.

Photo: iStockphoto.com/Leif Norman

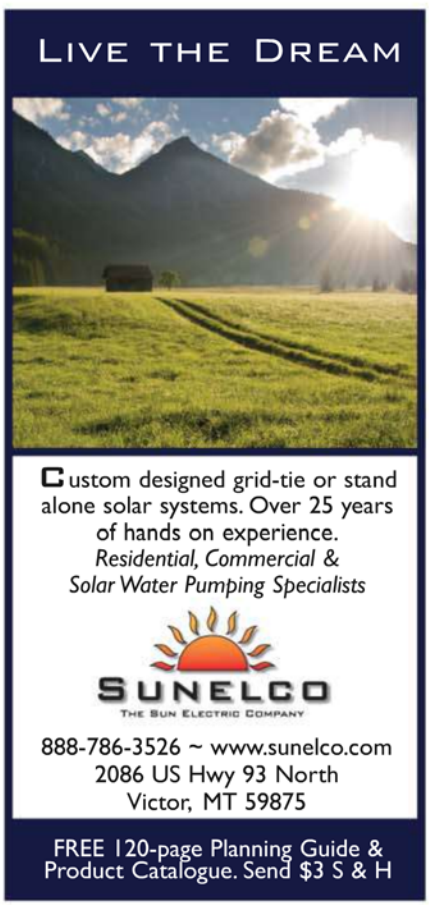
Fluid dynamics

When approaching your compact tractor's transmission/hydraulic oil change (on most new machines, the transmission and hydraulic system share the same fluid), you will want to purchase the necessary filters ahead of time and read the manual carefully. In some cases, three of four different drain plugs need to be removed to drain all the oil, and refilling can require the use of more than one fill port. The manual will show you where and how to accomplish this. In many cases,

Circle #7; see card pg 65

Circle #11; see card pg 65

Circle #6; see card pg 65



Circle #22; see card pg 65

BRAD ANDERSON

reinstalled drain plugs need to be tightened with a specific rotational force or torque. You will need a torque wrench to measure torque – no toolbox should be without at least one. Be sure you have a used oil disposal plan – you can take it to a recycling center, offer it to someone who has a used-oil furnace, or burn it in your own.

The typical transmission/hydraulic system fluid service goes like this: run the tractor to warm the fluids so they will flow, shut the tractor down, clean around the drain plugs and filters, drain the fluid, remove the old filter(s) (purchase an oil filter wrench if you have trouble getting the old filters off), install the new filter(s) (many are designed for hand tightening), clean any crud that's stuck to magnetic drain plugs, reinstall the plugs, add new oil, and bleed air out of the hydraulic system, if required (your manual will let you know and show you how). Finally, you should run the tractor for a few minutes, then recheck the oil level – this is usually as simple as pulling a dipstick, wiping it, reinstalling and removing it again to read the oil level.

Engine oil is changed more often than transmission/hydraulic system fluid, but the drill is essentially the same whether you are working on the lawn mower or the tractor. Warm up the engine, shut it down, drain the oil, remove the old filter and install the new (when equipped), along with the recommended amount and type of oil.

Some tractor engines have more than one drain plug – remove them all. In some cases, the new engine oil filter needs to be filled with clean oil before installation. After adding the recommended volume of engine oil, check the level with the dipstick (or other measure – see manual), run the engine for a minute to check for leaks, then recheck the level. Too much oil can be almost as disastrous to an engine as too little.

It won't take long before you're replacing spark plugs on the lawn mower and other machinery.

iStockphoto.com/Fertnig

If your tractor has front-wheel assist, or true four-wheel drive, you will need to change the oil in the front live axle. This exercise often requires pulling three drain plugs and refilling. Front axle fluid is usually heavy-weight gear oil, not transmission/hydraulic fluid, so don't be tempted to use the latter unless it is specified in your manual.

Engine coolant (antifreeze) checks are pretty easy to make by looking at the fluid level in the radiator's expansion (overflow) bottle. Add coolant as needed while keeping track of whether the engine is hot or cold.

If you need to replace a cracked radiator hose, or even replace the radiator (an easy task on most tractors), you will likely need to drain the cooling system. Most of the time that's as easy as opening one or two plugs – be sure you catch and dispose of the old coolant properly. When you go to refill the system, add the right mixture of antifreeze and water to ensure that it cannot freeze during the coldest nights of winter – if water-based fluids freeze inside your engine, the engine will become a very expensive boat anchor overnight.

Grease the skids

Call them alemites, zerks or grease fittings, but pay attention to their locations and spend some time pumping grease into them as recommended in the manual. Grease fittings are located anywhere from PTO-shaft universal joints and slip joints to loader pivot points, to steering knuckles, to baler knotters, to you name it. Sometimes it's difficult to find all the grease fittings on a piece of equipment. The manual will give you a map, and your machinery will last much longer if you follow it.

Don't have a grease gun in your toolbox yet? Head down to your local farm store and pick one up with both rigid and flexible hoses. And while you're at it, buy a case of good all-purpose grease. The whole works might set you back $35 depending on how fancy a grease gun and how fancy the grease. But the cost and headache of replacing a blown universal joint just once will make that $35 seem like pennies.

A close shave

In these throwaway and product-liability times, mower makers would rather you replace your deck's blades than resharpen them, and some manufacturers even suggest that you haul the mower to the dealership to have the new blades installed. However, mower-blade replacement is pretty straightforward and is still outlined in most owner's manuals – new blades are available at your dealership and most decent farm stores. The process goes something like this: remove and flip the mowing deck, or otherwise tip and safely support (blocks of wood, jack stands, etc.) the mower so you can get at the nut (or bolt) that keeps the blade attached to the deck's spindle, loosen and remove the nut, and remove the blade.

On some mowers, the blade-retaining nuts are reverse threaded – you turn clockwise to loosen as opposed to the other way around, which is normal for most threaded fasteners. The manual will explain how to turn the nut while keeping the blades from spinning. Reinstalling new blades is the reverse of the

AMPLIFY YOUR ABILITY WITH TOOLS

Even if powerlifting isn't part of your daily routine, with the right tools, you can use leverage to finesse your way to cracking those tough nuts – and bolts. Here are some tools that should definitely be in your kit.

SOCKET WRENCH SET – a set of sockets and ratcheting handles used to drive them, which engage nuts and bolts of virtually all types and sizes.

18-INCH BREAKER BAR – used to drive sockets attached to particularly stubborn fasteners.

SPECIALIZED DRIVERS – special fasteners such as Torx, square-drive and others require screwdriver-like bits – add these to your tool chest as you encounter specialized fasteners.

ASSORTED PLIERS – pinching tools that can be used to grasp, turn, retrieve, etc. – include a selection of needle nose, regular and locking models.

OIL FILTER WRENCH – used mainly to loosen spin-on type oil filters; can also be used to tighten new filters.

OPEN-ENDED WRENCHES – jaw-shaped, wrenches designed to slip onto hex or square-headed fasteners.

BOX WRENCHES – like open-ended wrenches except the bolt-engaging end is closed and must be slipped over the fastener to engage it.

ASSORTED ADJUSTABLE WRENCHES – often called Crescent wrenches, these tools are adjustable to fit and drive nuts and bolts with hexagonal or square heads.

TORQUE WRENCH – used as a socket drive to tighten fasteners with a specific force.

ASSORTED SCREWDRIVERS – keep a collection of flat-blade (sometimes called regular) and cross-blade (Phillips) in your kit at the very least.

process – you will need access to a torque wrench to be sure that the blade-retaining fasteners are sufficiently snug.

Roll on

Tires have a tendency to go flat, come off the rim, and generally inconvenience or even endanger you on a whim. Small, tubeless, low-pressure, low speed-rated machine tires, such as those found on utility vehicles, lawn tractors and many implements, seem to need constant attention, while large rear tractor tires are often less demanding. In any case, you need to own a good tire pressure gauge and a decent air compressor (not the little 12-volt, cigarette-lighter-powered model) with hose and tire chucks if you want to avoid a mess of labor and a trip to town whenever a tire needs attention. The easiest way to keep tires from going flat is to routinely check their pressure and add air as required.

When you pulled the trailer out of the shed earlier and noticed two flats, you might have visually checked to see that the tires were still sealed to the rims, then aired them up with the compressor. When once-flat tires are pumped back up, it's a good idea to figure out why they "suddenly" went flat while sitting over the winter.

First, check to be sure that the valve stem is sound (press it sideways and listen for a telltale hiss) and the valve core is tightly seated (insert a valve core tool into the valve stem and turn clockwise until it's tight). If the stem is leaking and the valve core appears to be tight, or the tires have pulled away from the rim, it's likely time to take the tires to a shop and have a pro take a look (critical for high-speed tires to which you entrust lives on the highway). If you suspect that the valve core is leaking, remove it with the valve core tool (turn counterclockwise), take the core to a tire shop or parts store and purchase a replacement (less than $1 in many cases).

When low-speed and low-pressure tubeless tires go flat and come loose from the rim, you can often reseat them by wrapping a ratchet strap around the tire's circumference (centered on the tread) and tightening until the tire's beads make decent contact with the rim flanges. Now use your compressor to get as much air flowing into the tire as possible and, with any luck, you will manage to remount the tire.

A chronic leaky low-pressure and low-speed tire can be rendered less likely to lose air by removing the valve core, pumping sufficient tire sealant, such as Slime, into the tire, reinstalling the valve core, airing up the tire, and running the machine for several minutes to sufficiently distribute the sealant.

Be brave

Once you tackle a few fluid fills, filter changes, blade installations and tire repairs, you can move on to replacing spark plugs on small lawn mower engines or older tractor engines. Next thing you know, you'll be confident enough to replace your lawn tractor's drive belts or garden tractor's drive clutch. In no time, you'll be ready to take on even more involved maintenance and repair tasks, such as greasing and adjusting wheel bearings or replacing an engine's water pump. One thing is for sure, no matter how much machinery maintenance you choose to do yourself, your efforts will pay.

Editor Hank Will enjoys saving money by serving as his own farm's warranty repair station, which is a good thing since much of its equipment is decades old.

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Circle #19; see card pg 65

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Beefing UP the Troops

Southeast Kansas grassfed beef operation grows right along with morale of overseas soldiers.

By Caleb D. Regan

Imagine the sense of satisfaction Lt. Col. Kevin Schenker, stationed in Kabul, Afghanistan, felt when, while seated in a dentist chair awaiting treatment, the dentist walked in eating one of his beef sticks. Hearing Kevin's wife, Cherie, tell the story, you can't help but feel the pride in her voice.

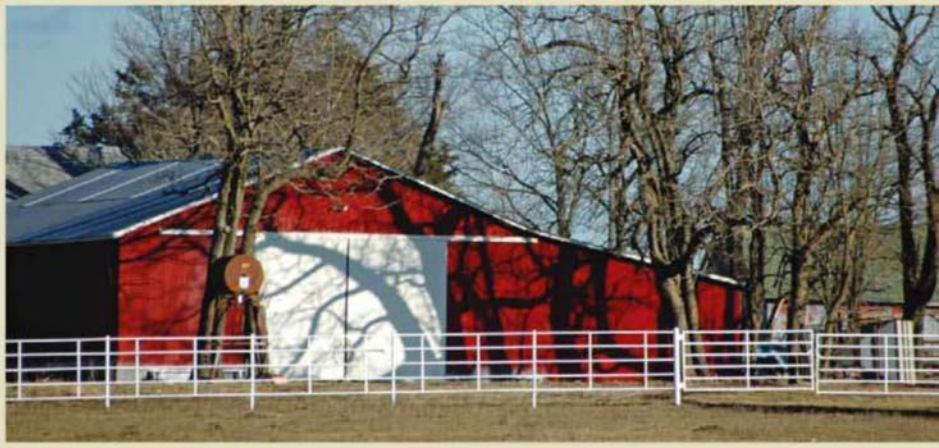
The dentist came in talking about how good the beef stick she was eating tasted, and Kevin couldn't help but smile. When asked why he was amused, he needed to only motion to his nametag and the label on the beef stick. That beef stick came from one of his own Kansas grassfed steers.

The Schenkers' story is one of farm life, traditions passed down from one generation to the next, and an altruistic spirit they take into their niche-market business that is not often found or able to be applied in modern agriculture.

The basis for it all is a grassfed meat operation, located on a farm near McCune, Kansas (population 400 on a good day), that was started by Cherie's great-grandfather. What separates the Schenker farm from others that are emerging – as the grassfed, back-to-the-land movement becomes a more popular trend across the nation – is that the Schenkers, through Adopt-a-Platoon and their own efforts and out-of-pocket expenses, have developed a method for shipping their products to soldiers stationed overseas.

"One of the coolest things for me is when I get – I call it fan mail – a letter from some private first class who's probably 19 years old, thanking me for a touch of home," Cherie says. "He's over there so far away with a lot of people he's never met before, he's young, and it is just something to remind him of home."

The appreciation that Cherie and her farm express for the service of overseas soldiers is more than lip-service – or even its meat products. Kevin joined the National Guard when he was 17 years old and will retire in 2011, having spent 31 years in the armed forces.



The Schenker Family Farms operation; Cherie is pictured with daughter Josie, 8, and sons David, 2, and Wyatt, 10.

Photos: calf, barn and pasture, courtesy Schenker Family Farms; others, Caleb D. Regan

During his deployment, Cherie, their three children and numerous staff members have kept the operation flourishing. Schenker Family Farms (*www.Schenker Farms.com*) experienced triple-digit growth in 2009; a sign that a healthy market of consumers throughout America values the quality of the meat they eat and the location of the production process.

Cherie attributes another factor in their success: a customer service ethic that drives a large percentage of repeat business. While the Schenkers sell raw clover honey, some preserves and other products (Cherie holds up a femur from a cow, a chew-toy for dogs that is selling well right now), their primary business is in the meat. And of that, about 95 percent is shipped, with about 80 percent of that shipped within U.S. borders.

A portion of their product is hand-delivered; Cherie says there's nothing quite like that personal interface with the public, delivering items directly to the door. The Schenkers have increased the delivery part of the business to include routes in Wichita, Kansas City and Topeka, with another set to go to Tulsa before long.

Even with customers she never meets, Cherie talks about how far the family business goes to win their repeat customers.

"I had a woman call me, and she wanted to send her husband some steaks for Valentine's Day (he's serving in Iraq). She really didn't have the money to send him the steaks, so we worked with her to find something that would meet her budget and meet her needs," Cherie says. "She just thought that was great. I was on the phone with her almost 45 minutes trying to help her make some

decisions. … She was able to do something neat for him on Valentine's Day, and we got to be a part of that."

That brings up the overseas shipping process the Schenkers have put into practice, making it possible to ship frozen products to a desert country thousands of miles away.

The idea arose when the family found out Kevin was being deployed and would be away for his birthday. "My wonderful husband could live on ribeye steaks, baked potatoes and salad for the rest of his life," Cherie says, "I wanted to be able to send him some ribeyes for his birthday."

So began development of a special shipping container for keeping meats frozen longer. The Schenkers worked with a company in Georgia to develop a package within a package of sorts, from a biodegradable material that has a much higher R-value than Styrofoam. The new shipping container can keep meat products frozen for up to 23 days; quite remarkable when you consider it isn't uncommon to experience a 123-degree July day in Afghanistan.

With this new means of safe delivery, Kevin wouldn't be the only soldier overseas to receive delicious meats from the Kansas prairie. Several years back, Cherie saw a television clip on the news about Adopt-a-Platoon, and before long the family farm adopted its first soldier. Imagine how lucky you'd feel, grilling up a ribeye steak in place of normal Army rations, and that's quite a difference-maker for an 18-year-old man or woman.

Since that first soldier, the Schenkers have taken responsibility for lifting the spirits of a group of soldiers with their grassfed ground beef, steaks, brats, snack sticks and other products. At present, they support 15 soldiers from Kansas – all stationed in northern Iraq.

All care-packages sent to these soldiers are donated, and the Schenkers also make it as affordable as possible for family members and other loved ones to send their products directly to APOs overseas.

"Everything we sell to family members, we sell at a pretty steep discount," Cherie says. "It's well below wholesale. We're covering our costs, almost."

More than likely, that commitment to high quality meat isn't going to stop with Kevin and Cherie. Before them, Cherie's grandfather was somewhat ahead of his time, recognizing the importance of a good quality of life for his animals that would in turn sustain him.

He raised grassfed cattle and fed some home-raised corn on this same farm back in the 1940s and '50s. "He had some very definite, old-fashioned values about how you treat your animals, and that doing what's best for the animals comes back around to what's best for you."

Cherie's grandfather's values are apparent on the Schenker Family Farms sign, which indicates their operation is both Animal Welfare Approved and Certified Naturally Grown. Make no mistake – it's not like the cattle are just turned out on fescue either, they're raised on four specialty grasses grazed in rotation, as well as turnips planted in the fields. The turnips are high in protein, and cattle love the turnip tops. When the turnips decompose into the earth, it's a huge boost for the soil as well, a natural fertilizer.

So the legacy continues, and its products are enjoyed internationally and at home. One day, the Schenkers hope their children will continue in the business; Wyatt, age 10, started his foray into livestock production this summer by building his own chicken coop and selling free-range eggs at local farmers' markets.

Such a devotion to quality meat production, high husbandry standards, and sharing all of it with others has become a profitable business for the Schenkers. Cherie also enjoys knowing she is producing leaner and healthier meat for her family and customers. Their ability to offer some comfort to combat troops deployed overseas only adds to the rewards – particularly since Schenker Family Farms knows all too well how isolated family members can feel while serving their country. But just like that day Kevin found himself in the dentist's chair, a little Middle America grassfed beef can narrow that gap of isolation, at least for the time it takes to eat a beef stick or, better yet, a ribeye.

By the time this article went to press, Kevin Schenker had returned home to his Kansas farm. While he does enjoy good steaks and a warm bed, he's most thankful just to be home with his family. – Editors

A big fan of the ribeye himself, Caleb couldn't leave Schenker Family Farms without a pound of Rocky Mountain Oysters to share with his buddies.

WWW.GRIT.COM **Discover Hank's barbecue sauce recipe for grassfed beef and bison.**

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Circle #24; see card pg 65

A few tools, a few easy steps, and you'll be enjoying a bottle of the best.

Brew Your Own Beer

By Nathan Poell

The revolution has happened. Once upon a time, beer lovers in this country practically had to go on a safari to find a high-quality, flavorful brew. No more. In fact, chances are good that you live within a short drive of a brew-pub, microbrewery or – at the very least – a store from which you can purchase quality beer. In fact, the craft brew industry is so strong right now, you may wonder, "Why even bother trying to brew my own beer?"

A few reasons are compelling. First, you are in full control of the ingredients you put into your brew. This leads naturally to the second: Given that you have full control, you can brew beers to completely suit your own tastes, beers that commercial breweries would never risk brewing. Want to brew an American pale ale? Sure. Want to brew a chocolate cherry ancho pepper-flavored porter? Hey, I'm not here to judge. Third, while the initial cash outlay, though minimal, may intimidate some, it is far cheaper in the long run to brew your own beer than to buy microbrewed beer.

Brew tools

To get started brewing your own beer, you'll need a few essential pieces of equipment. You can find all kinds of brewing supplies at local home-brew supply shops or online at sites such as Northern Brewer and William's Brewing.

www.Grit.com Use herbs, sugar and yeast to produce great soda pop this summer.

Opposite: iStockphoto.com/Trevor Moore

RECIPE FOR A BASIC AMERICAN BROWN ALE

American brown ale is a slightly richer, hoppier version of the classic English brown ale style. Good examples of commercial brown ales include Moose Drool Brown Ale from Big Sky Brewing, and Sierra Nevada Brown Ale. The following ingredients are typically sold at homebrewing shops, and this list might cost you about $35 to $40. You'll need the grain cracked, which you can do with a rolling pin and a plastic bag, or you can ask the shop to crack the grain for you. Yields 5 gallons.

- 3 ounces (60 L) (Lovibond) crystal malt
- 2 ounces chocolate malt
- 2 ounces biscuit malt
- 1 ounce (550 L) black malt
- 6 pounds Munton's plain light dry malt extract (DME)
- 1 ounce whole leaf 'Cascade' hops
- 1 ounce whole leaf 'East Centennial' hops
- 2 packets Windsor Ale yeast (or other dried ale yeast)
- 1¼ cups corn sugar or Munton's extra light DME or 1 cup honey

Surrounded by dried hops, a freshly poured pint of stout awaits.

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www.BeerAmerica.tv

THE BREW KETTLE. This can be a regular stainless steel, enameled iron or aluminum stockpot, preferably 12 quarts or larger. For advanced brewing, the kettle must be at least 6 gallons, but for the purposes of this article, 12 quarts will do. This is the most expensive piece of brewing equipment, but you can get it for about $40. Altogether the rest of the equipment may run you another $50 or $60.

A SOUP SPOON. This can be plastic, wooden or steel; it doesn't matter.

A CANDY THERMOMETER or other thermometer that can be put into hot liquid.

STRAINER AND/OR FUNNEL. This will be used to strain the spent hops out of your wort (raw beer) as you pour it into the primary fermenter.

An alternative to a strainer is a HOP/GRAIN BAG. These are reusable cotton or nylon bags that retain the hop cones/solids while allowing the enjoyable properties of the hops to flow into the wort during the boiling process. They may also be used to hold specialty grains for those who use the "extract with specialty grains" method, which this article covers.

THE FERMENTATION VESSEL(S)/BOTTLING BUCKET. These should be food-grade plastic or glass vessels, also called carboys, in which the wort will ferment and mature. Home-brew stores sell them – the ones with spigots are especially convenient – or you can scavenge them (plastic ones, at least) from the bulk foods section of your local organic food store. If you scavenge, be sure to clean the vessel thoroughly to remove residual food and oils, and drill or puncture a hole in the lid (you'll absolutely need a lid) for the airlock.

Speaking of which, you'll also need AIRLOCKS AND RUBBER STOPPERS. When I was a boy and my grandpa made wine, he put a balloon over the top of the fermenter. It made a comical sight when filled with carbon dioxide. You could conceivably put a balloon on a glass carboy, but it wouldn't stay there long given the vigorous fermentation involved with beer making. Better to use purpose-made airlocks and/or rubber stoppers to allow off-gassing while preventing bacteria and wild yeasts from finding their way into your precious brew.

THE BASIC PROCESS

There are a few generally accepted methods of brewing beer: extract only, extract with specialty grains, partial mash and all-grain. In this case, we'll be using extract with specialty grains. This means that we'll steep some specialty grains for a bit to extract a little sugar and flavor from them, then add malt extract – freeze-dried maltose and other sugars and solids extracted from barley – as the main source of sugar (which the yeast that we'll add later loves to eat and turn into alcohol and carbon dioxide).

Here are the steps to brew the American brown ale on Page 61.

1. Sanitize your primary fermenter.
2. In the brew kettle, boil 3 gallons of water. Pour it into a fermentation bucket (not the one in which you intend to do your primary fermentation). Heat 2.5 gallons of water in your brew kettle to 150 degrees Fahrenheit – this is now called the hot liquor.
3. Using a grain bag, steep the crystal, chocolate, biscuit and black malts in the hot liquor for 20 minutes, stirring regularly and maintaining the temperature of 150 degrees.
4. Remove the grain bag from the kettle and add a half-gallon of water and the dried malt extract (DME), stirring vigorously to dissolve.
5. Bring to a boil, being extremely careful to watch out for boil-over. Once at a boil, add the 'Cascade' hops (in hop bag). Maintain rolling boil.
6. After 30 minutes, add the 'Centennial' hops in another hop bag. Maintain a rolling boil.
7. After another 30 minutes, cut heat and let the kettle sit for 10 minutes.
8. Remove hop bags – after pressing with spoon to remove any extra wort (it's now officially called wort, by the way) – then pour wort into the primary fermentation vessel, preferably a plastic bucket with a spigot.
9. From the other bucket, pour in enough water to reach the 5-gallon mark on the primary fermenter. Attach lid and airlock filled with sanitizer liquid.
10. Let the bucket sit until it reaches almost room temperature. Remove the lid and add both packets of ale yeast. Reattach lid and airlock, and swirl the fermenter to dissolve the yeast and aerate the beer.
11. Set the fermenter in a shady spot with an ambient temperature between 60 and 70 degrees.
12. Wait. Within 16 hours you should see activity in the airlock, which will periodically bubble. Let the beer go in the primary fermenter for two weeks, or until active fermentation is completed (i.e., no bubbles when you watch for 90 seconds).

Start with grain, whether you brew inside on the stove or outside over propane.

Then add the malt.

Use plenty of hops; you can buy dried leaves or pellets, or even grow your own.

Check the temperature and let the yeast do the work. Photos: Megan Phelps (4)

13. You're at an option point here. You can either: 1) bottle your beer right now, which means you can be drinking it within another two or three weeks, or 2) siphon your beer into a secondary fermenter, which will help it to clarify before you bottle it. If bottling, go to Step 15.
14. Sanitize your secondary fermenter and a length of hose, then run some sanitizer over the spigot (you got one with a spigot, right?) of the primary fermenter. Attach hose to primary fermenter spigot and run the beer into the secondary fermenter. Once complete, attach lid and airlock to secondary fermenter and let sit another two weeks.
15. To bottle, sanitize your bottling bucket according to the directions on your sanitizing solution's label. Sanitize all the bottles/jugs and caps/lids you're going to use in the bottling bucket before pouring out the sanitizing solution, as well as your brewing spoon, one long length of plastic hose and the 12-inch length. You may also want to sanitize the spigot of the bucket you're running the beer out of — use a very clean sponge or cotton swab soaked in sanitizer. Then, set the bottles and caps (or jugs and lids) aside and pour out the sanitizing solution.
16. In a small saucepan, bring 2 cups of water and 1¼ cups corn sugar to a boil. (You can also use 1¼ cups of extra light dried malt extract or 1 cup of honey — I prefer honey.) Ensure the mixture is homogenized, then cut the heat.
17. Once you're ready to go, pour the sugar-water mixture into the bottling bucket. You can stir as the beer runs into the bottling bucket, but stir gently so you don't aerate the beer.
18. Once the beer is in the bottling bucket, attach the 12-inch length of hose. This will make it easier to bottle the beer. Run the beer into your containers and attach the lids as you go. This is the most tedious part of the entire process, but remember, it's worth it.
19. Once you're done capping all your bottles, set them in a shady, not-too-warm spot and forget about them for a few weeks.
20. After two or three weeks, depending on how warm it is, check in on your brew. Shake a bottle to see if bubbles form rapidly. Uncap one to check it out. If it doesn't hiss — and you know what a properly carbonated beer hisses like, I imagine — seal it up again and wait another week. Check it again after that — chances are it'll be ready. You can leave most of the bottles at room temperature and chill only what you want to drink, but this type of beer is best consumed within two or three months after it's bottled.
21. Cheers!

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Circle #17; see card pg 65

FOOD-GRADE PLASTIC HOSE. This is necessary to transport fermented beer from vessel to vessel without allowing it to oxidize. It is typically clear and sold at all reputable home-brew shops. Be sure the hose is of a diameter that will fit on the spigot of your fermentation vessels (if yours has a spigot). You'll need at least two lengths of hose that are 2 or more feet long and one that is about 12 inches.

BOTTLES AND/OR JUGS WITH CAPS/LIDS. You're going to have to put your finished beer into something, after all. I use a keg now, but I used to prefer to bottle in half-gallon growler jugs like you'd get from a brewpub. Most beginning brewers decide to bottle their finished beer in 12- or 22-ounce bottles. To bottle up a 5-gallon batch, you'll need about 53 12-ounce bottles, or about 29 22-ounce bottles. Also, if you decide to bottle in 12- or 22-ounce bottles, you'll need a capper to attach the caps to filled bottles. It's especially convenient to use swing-top bottles. This type of bottle is used by the Grolsch and Fischer breweries and some high-end French lemonade bottlers, so you may be able to find some to reuse.

SANITIZING LIQUID. Wild yeasts and bacteria are hardy microbes. One of the better sanitization methods is to use a non-bleach, no-rinse sanitizer such as StarSan or iodophor (available at home-brew stores) in your fermentation vessel, then reuse the same solution to sanitize your bottles or jugs.

Your local home-brew shop may sell a "beginner's kit." These will include almost everything listed here, but double-check to make sure everything is present. Nothing's worse than brewing up a batch of beer only to find out you have no way of transporting it to another vessel or bottling it.

Resources and more

Once you're finished with your first batch, you'll probably wonder where to go from there. Well, try experimenting with the recipe on Page 61. Add a couple more ounces of hops, a few more ounces of crystal malt and another pound or two of malt extract, and you'll have a fine Extra Special Bitter.

Also, read up. The de facto introduction to homebrewing is Charlie Papazian's *The New Complete Joy of Homebrewing.* His *The Homebrewer's Companion* is also excellent, but don't stop there. If you're looking to brew a specific style, be on the lookout for Brewer Publications' "Classic Beer Style Series." Once you think you've learned everything there is to know, check out *An Analysis of Brewing Techniques* by Laurie and the late George Fix and be humbled. Your local library will probably have at least one of these and can get others for you via interlibrary loan.

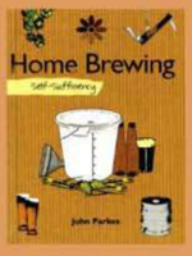
I find it's a lot more fun (not to mention easier and cheaper) to brew with fellow enthusiasts. Fortunately, a vast network of home-brew clubs is available. Visit the American Brewers Association, *www.BeerTown.org*, to look up an affiliated brew club.

If you don't find one in your community, be a groundbreaker and start one yourself.

For advanced procedures, techniques, equipment and recipes, the Internet has you covered. The Brews & Views Bulletin Board (*hbd.org/cgi-bin/discus/discus.cgi*) and the Northern Brewer Homebrew Forum (*forum.northernbrewer.com*) are among the best beer discussion groups on the Web. Don't be afraid to ask questions on these forums, but always try searching beforehand to spare yourself the embarrassment of Internet ridicule.

And if you ever brew that chocolate cherry ancho pepper porter, send me a bottle, will ya?

Nathan Poell is a fermentation fanatic who frequently brews beer with friends in Lawrence, Kansas.



Turn to Page 86 for ordering information on *Home Brewing* by John Parkes.

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Homegrown Strawberries!

Easy to produce, these red delights deserve a place in your garden.

By Biz Reynolds

Fresh strawberries, straight from the garden, are a great summer treat.

Lori Dunn

STRAWBERRIES – everyone's favorite fruit – are welcome heralds of summer, and they are so easy to grow in a garden, flower bed, or any patch of sandy soil; even in a patio pot.

Strawberry plants are inexpensive and available at most local nurseries and in mail-order garden catalogs. Any gardener will have success growing the fruit if she follows a few simple rules.

Why grow your own? As anyone who does can tell you, nothing is more pleasant than getting up early on a clear, sunny morning, wandering outside while a mockingbird sings, and finding five or six dewy, sparkling red berries with which to decorate your morning bowl of cereal. The flavor of fresh berries is rich, pure and crisp.

Several years ago when my U-Pick berry patch in Johnson County, Missouri, was at its height of popularity, good, store-bought commercial berries were hard to find. The overly large cone-shaped Driscoll variety, widely available at most grocery stores, lacked flavor and had a crunchy texture making it difficult to believe that these were even an edible food. Since then, producers have come a long way in improving the commercial strawberry, and although still overly firm (necessary for successful shipping), the flavor has improved. However, homegrown berries' outstanding flavor, convenience, cost, quality and stellar health benefits are all good reasons for cultivating your own patch, large or small.

What variety?

I have grown berries in my yard for many years, experimenting with several different cultivars. I keep coming back to the same old variety – Surecrop. It is the first berry type I grew more than 20 years ago, and it is in my garden this spring. It's the variety that I regularly provide for the participants in the local strawberry-growing classes I teach.

Surecrop is foolproof to grow and has been around for a long time. These plants are hardy, prolific and dependable. In fact, Surecrop's prolific runners sometimes become their own brand of "weed," producing more volunteer runner plants than there is space to accommodate.

Berry plants send out many slender, string-like daughter runners which will root and produce the next year. Once started, your bed will continually enlarge itself, without further financial output by you.

Choosing a good spot

Grow plants in a sunny area unaffected by tree roots or tree shade. Berry plants do best in loose soil with added compost or sand. Make sure the chosen spot has good drainage; plants sitting in soggy soil will die a slow death.

WWW.GRIT.COM Learn a few simple techniques to preserve the bounty.

New plants and planting

I order my berries from *www.InBerry .com* and receive them in a leafless dormant state, with plenty of plump roots; dampened, bagged and in perfect condition, always with two or three extra plants added in as a bonus per bundle of 25.

Keep new plants in the refrigerator or a cold garage until you can work the soil outdoors.

With scissors, clip off broken, stray or scraggly roots and leaves. Then immerse the new plants in a bucket of water for 15 minutes or so before setting them in the ground. Soaking gives them a helpful dose of moisture and protects them from the drying effects of sun, wind and handling.

If you intend to set out thousands of plants, there is specialized machinery available for this purpose. But for the average backyard planting, you will be doing the work by hand on bended knee.

Prepare the area by discing, plowing or tilling – preferably the fall before your planting date. Make sure all tough grass, invasive clover and weeds in general are completely torn out and gone, and that the soil is soft and rock- and debris-free.

Mark out straight rows; then with a hoe or trowel, scoop shallow depressions at 12- to 18-inch intervals. After spreading out the plant's root system to resemble a spider, place it carefully in the shallow hole. Completely cover the roots with soil, then tamp the soil down firmly to eliminate air pockets and ensure good root-soil contact.

Above the plant roots is a small bump, or "crown." Don't cover the crown with soil, or situate it too high above the soil level. The crown is the new "plant," and within days of being put in its place, it will send out fresh new emerald-green leaves.

Care of new plants

Water your new plants weekly until well-established. Wait for sunny days to do their magic, and you'll soon have a row of lush, healthy plants. Don't fertilize at this point; the new plants are tender and can burn.

In a few weeks, white blossoms appear, often clustered together on one or two long stems. Check plants frequently, and, with scissors, snip off these stems at ground level. Clipping off the first-year blossoms allows the plant to channel all its energy into establishing a root system, rather than trying to produce and ripen berries.

Keep the bed watered and weeded, as you would any other garden area. The last item on your task list takes place in early winter; once the ground is frozen, mulch the plants lightly with loose straw or other available material. The mulch protects the plants from the soil's pitching and heaving during the alternate cold and warm spells that inevitably occur between fall and spring.

Second year ... harvest

In the spring, check for the first new growth, then uncover the rows, carefully raking the mulch into pathways. The mulch protects the plants and ripe berries from muddy splashes caused by hard rains, and helps stop disease particles from splattering the leaves. Straw mulch also makes a pleasant path on which to walk when the surrounding ground is muddy.

Buds appear, only this time they are not

New spring growth tells you that great-tasting strawberries are on the way. Photos: Biz Reynolds (3)

Notice how the plant puts out new runners, and trim some. Too many will crowd the patch.

A strawberry blossom is nearly as beautiful as the ripe, red strawberry it will produce.

iStockphoto.com/Shuchun Ke

INTERESTED IN U-PICK?

A U-Pick business can be a fun and rewarding money-making venture. However, such a business takes hard work and dedication. Advertise heavily the first year in local newspapers; after that, the berries will sell themselves by way of repeat customers and word-of-mouth.

In addition to having "some berries for sale," your patch should be large, neat, organized and weed-free. This attracts customers and ensures they will return the following year. We also offered "We-Pick" for those unable to bend over for significant lengths of time. It is appropriate to charge quite a bit more per pound when the patch operator is doing the picking. Open every other day to ensure plenty of available berries for pickers.

clipped off. The buds are allowed to bloom, age and drop their petals; and then, from the tight green-golden flower center, a berry forms. Warm, dry days are good for berry plants and for ripening the crop. Excess rain, heat and high humidity can cause the bright red fruit to turn gray and soggy or to succumb to mold – a grayish-white fuzzy coating that covers and shrivels the berry. Too much moisture also makes large berries with diluted flavor.

Check your patch every day, keeping ripe berries picked to avoid waste. Each plant should produce about 2 quarts of berries. Pick the fruit on cool, dry days; place in shallow containers to avoid squashing. Homegrown berries are not as crisp as commercially shipped berries. Most varieties are fairly firm, but they will not stand up well under excess weight. Also, it is natural for overall berry size to gradually diminish as the season progresses. The late-season, smaller berries have the most intense flavor.

Store berries unwashed in the refrigerator or other cool area. When ready to use, wash, drain and shuck (remove stem and leaves). Shucking before washing causes a lot of juice to leak out and be wasted.

Using your berries

Unfortunately, fresh homegrown berries are available for only a few short, glorious weeks, usually from mid- to late May until early to mid-June. However, you can enjoy homegrown strawberries year-round if you preserve them. Freeze the best berries; make jewel-toned jams or dry rolls of nutritious fruit leather from the imperfect ones.

FREEZING: Wash, shuck, slice and mix cut berries with sugar; the more sugar used, the better the keeping quality. However, the nutrition content will be somewhat compromised. Frozen berries will keep perfectly for 6 months, and although they are edible after that amount of time, they will begin to lose quality and flavor. Freeze berries in plastic storage containers; such containers are leakproof and stack well in the freezer.

To freeze individually, lay berries in a single layer on cookie sheets. Once frozen, store in freezer containers.

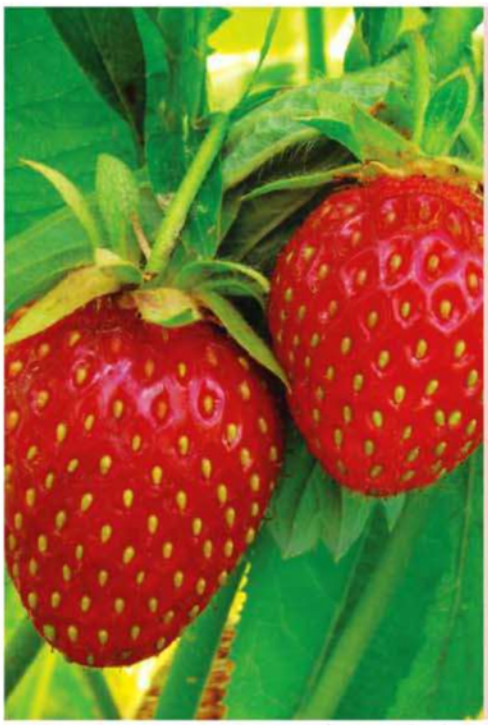
JAM: Follow the directions on the fruit pectin packages for canned or freezer jam.

LEATHER: Purée berries and add a bit of sugar. Pour liquid onto food dryer racks lined with special fruit roll-up trays. Dry for about nine hours – until firm but not brittle. Or, spread puréed berries onto sprayed cookie sheets and dry in low-heat oven overnight.

Second year ... care and renovation

After the harvest, dry your tears and then get out the push mower, raising the blade to its highest level. Ruthlessly mow off old plants, leaves, rotted berries and all. It's difficult to do, but it is advantageous to your patch. It rids the patch of old and possibly diseased plant material.

Surecrop plants send out an overabundance of runners (I counted 17 on one busy



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COMMON AND UNCOMMON BERRY PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

- **DEER** – These beautiful creatures eat leaves and browse the patch. It's an occasional problem, with no real solution other than fencing.
- **BEETLES** – Such pests cause only some slight boring/nibbling damage. The only solution I know of is chemical application.
- **BIRDS** – Cedar waxwings especially like to eat first the red, then the pink, and even the white unripened berries in turn. The desperate solution is to shoot into the flock. Commercial noise-makers are available from *www.InBerry.com*, but they are not cost effective for small patches. Use red-painted pebbles early in the season to fool the birds into thinking that the *real* berries later in the season are hard and tasteless.
- **DISEASES** – Surecrop is not susceptible to common strawberry diseases. Other varieties may require chemical application. Use crop rotation methods.
- **CLOVER AND GRASS** – These can become invasive if not watched closely. Weed with great care. It is best to move the patch to a new location every 3 to 7 years.

FUN FACTS

iStockphoto.com/Thomas Perkins

- Strawberries are a member of the rose family.
- 1.5 pounds of berries = 1 quart = 4 cups, sliced
- On average, there are 200 seeds in one strawberry.
- California produces 75 percent of the nation's strawberry crop.
- In France, strawberries were cultivated in the 13th century for use as a medicinal herb.
- Madame Tallien, of Emperor Napoleon's court, was famous for bathing in the juice of fresh strawberries. She used 22 pounds per bath.
- The Romans prized wild strawberries for the fruit's medicinal properties. They believed the berries alleviated such symptoms and disorders as melancholy, fainting, inflammations, fevers, throat infections, kidney stones, halitosis, gout, and diseases of the blood, liver and spleen.
- One cup of sliced, fresh strawberries has 50 calories and 3.8 grams of fiber. Healthwise, strawberries (and all berries) are nutritional powerhouses — loaded with vitamins A and C, and several important minerals.

and prolific mother plant one year), which means your patch could actually crowd itself out by overpopulation quite quickly. Move some of the runners (next year's fruiting plants) back into the original row, and remove any others – especially if runners venture out any time after August. Even though a jungle-like green mat of thriving plants looks like a successful achievement, growing strawberries in this manner is actually detrimental to good berry production. The largest, sweetest berries are those growing along the sunny outer edges of the row. Several narrow rows are more productive than a large matted row.

Once the patch is mowed, apply a light 10-10-10 or 12-12-12 fertilizer. Strawberries grow well in most soils, and regular fertilizing really isn't necessary. One year we applied too much well-rotted manure to our patch. The following May the foliage grew so thick that we had to use the weed trimmer to lop the plants down to allow air and sunlight to reach the heavily shaded fruits. The fruit was molding, not ripening.

Keep the patch weeded, watered, and then, once again, when the ground has frozen hard (usually in January in our area), apply fresh straw mulch. The patch is put to bed, but in a few more months – my mouth is already watering thinking about it – the sun will warm the ground, and tiny green leaves will poke up, bursting with energy. Plants bloom, fruit ripens and once again, you have fresh strawberry shortcake to enjoy.

Biz Reynolds lives on a beef farm in Missouri, worked at Powell Gardens botanical gardens for 13 years and ran her own U-Pick strawberry farm for several years. She currently has a backyard patch of Surecrop berries, since a person should never be without strawberries.

EASY STRAWBERRY PIE

This appears in my house many times.

Sliced, sweetened strawberries
8- or 9-inch pie crust, baked
1 package (small) wild strawberry gelatin
1 package (small) vanilla pudding (not instant)
2 cups water
1 teaspoon lemon juice
Frozen whipped topping, thawed

1 Place berries in cooled pie crust.
2 In saucepan, combine gelatin, pudding, water and lemon juice; bring to boil, stirring constantly, until thickened and a clear, bright red. Allow mixture to partially cool, then pour over berries in pie shell.
3 Chill several hours until firm; serve with whipped topping.

STRAWBERRY PIZZA

This is one of my most-requested recipes.

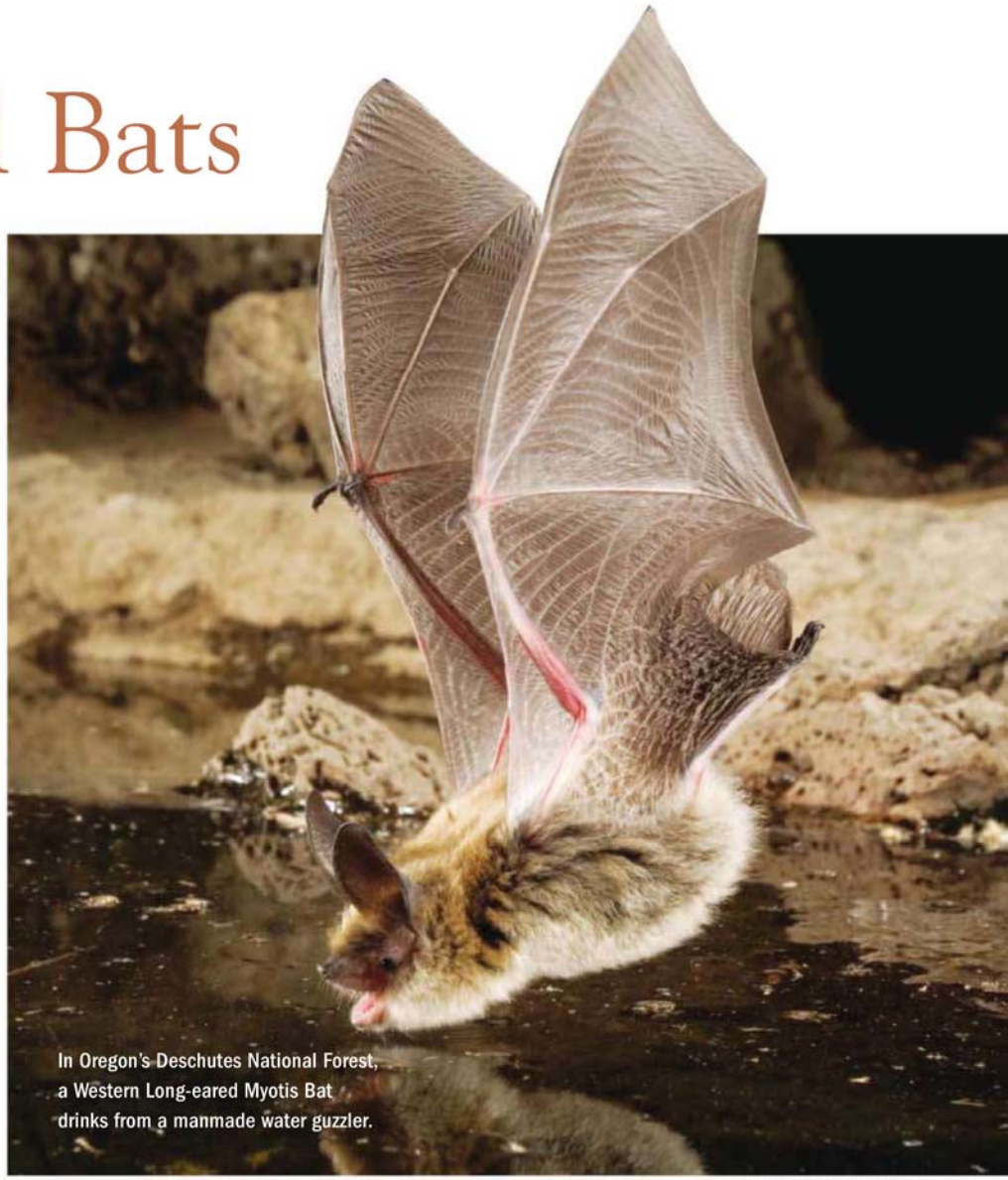
1 cup flour
½ cup butter
1⅓ cups confectioner's sugar, divided
8 ounces cream cheese
8 ounces frozen whipped topping, thawed
3 tablespoons strawberry gelatin (half of a 3-ounce box)
1 cup sugar
1 cup water
3 tablespoons cornstarch
Strawberries

1 Heat oven to 350°F. Combine flour, butter and ⅓ cup confectioner's sugar. Pat into pizza pan and bake 10 to 15 minutes, or until light golden brown. Cool.
2 Soften cream cheese. With mixer, beat cream cheese, whipped topping and remaining confect ioner's sugar until well-blended. Spread evenly over cooled crust.
3 In saucepan, combine gelatin, sugar, water and cornstarch; bring to boil, and boil until thick and clear. Cool.
4 Meanwhile, arrange sliced or small whole berries on top of cream cheese layer. When glaze has cooled but not thickened, spread evenly over entire pizza.

Beneficial Bats

While they eat a lot of pesky insects, bats are unwanted houseguests.

By Tim Nephew



In Oregon's Deschutes National Forest, a Western Long-eared Myotis Bat drinks from a manmade water guzzler.

Michael Durham/Minden Pictures

I HAD JUST ENTERED a deep, restful sleep when a sharp elbow from my wife jolted me into a conscious but ornery state of alert. "There's something in the attic!" she whispered. I strained my ears to catch the sound of an intruder while reaching for the flashlight I keep by the bed. After a few long minutes, I heard the noise that caused my wife such distress; a faint scratching resonated through the walls directly above the bed. As I lifted up the attic crawl door and swept the flashlight beam around the room, I suddenly was face to furry face with the intruders – a pair of brown bats.

Bats are a beneficial and generally gentle species, but they can become a nuisance if they decide to take up residence in your home or outbuildings. It is important, however, to understand the role that bats play in our environment and to shed some light on some of the common misconceptions people have about bats.

One of my earliest memories of bats involved watching them swoop and dip erratically at dusk in my hometown park. We were convinced at the time that they were divebombing us in order to get in our hair and give us rabies. What we didn't know then was that the bats' haphazard flight was their attempt to follow and eat insects that came out at night.

A great benefit provided by bats is their ability to consume enormous quantities of insects on their evening hunts. One Little Brown Bat can eat up to 1,000 mosquitoes in an hour. If you consider that even a small colony of bats may contain up to 50 or more members, it isn't hard to imagine the positive role bats play in our ability to enjoy a bug-free summer night. Because of their aggressive efforts to catch and eat insects, bats often seem to fly erratically, causing some people to believe they are being attacked by the bat. In truth, bats are excellent flyers and have no problem catching insects while avoiding people.

Bats have long been associated with rabies, but very few are ever infected with the disease. In fact, less than one half of 1 percent of bats carry rabies. According to Bat Conservation International (BCI), a nonprofit organization dedicated to conservation, education and research involving bats (*www.BatCon.org*), in more than 50 years, only 14 people have contracted rabies from North American bat species. Unlike other animals, bats infected with rabies rarely become aggressive.

Stray bats

Bats truly are beneficial, but if you're like me, you probably don't want to hear them crawling around in your attic or have them roosting in your machine shed. However, there is a big difference between finding a stray bat flying around inside your house and having

www.Grit.com Learn to protect bats from a devastating disease.

a colony in your home. BCI says bats that fly into human living quarters are usually lost youngsters whose primary goal is safe escape. They often will leave on their own if a window or door to the outside is opened while others leading to the rest of the house are closed. Bats are not aggressive, even if chased, but may bite if grabbed. BCI recommends using heavy leather gloves to handle a bat, or trapping it under a coffee can and slipping a piece of cardboard underneath to cover the opening, then releasing it outside.

Keep out

"The best defense is a good offense" may be a well-worn cliché, but when it comes to keeping bats out of buildings, the advice is well rewarded. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources states on its website (*www.MNDNR.org*), "The only consistently successful method of excluding unwanted bats is permanent physical exclusion." In other words, don't give bats an opportunity to get inside in the first place.

According to the Minnesota DNR, timing is critical for excluding bats. Most bats will not hibernate in houses or outbuildings in climates with a distinct winter season because they require the constant cool temperature found in roosts such as caves, tunnels or mines. Late fall or very early spring is the best time to make your structure batproof because bats will have migrated to winter roosts.

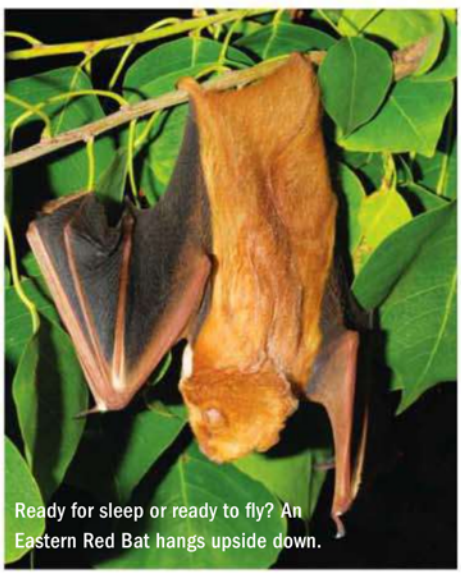
To keep bats out of your living areas, you should cover chimneys and vents with half-inch hardware cloth screens. Also think about installing draft guards under doors and try to seal any other access point such as areas around screen doors, windows or plumbing. Bats won't chew holes to gain access to your buildings, but they can squeeze through holes as small as ¾ of an inch in diameter. Other typical entry points include louver fans, air intakes, exhaust vents, and openings for power and cable lines.

Eviction hearing

If you know bats are already in the building, you need to watch at dusk – when the bats emerge for their evening hunt – to find and mark their entry points. It is then possible to put up ½-inch structural grade bird or bat netting (available at garden or hardware stores), which acts as a one-way egress to allow bats to exit but not return. Drape the netting over each entry point extending several inches above, one foot to the sides and two feet below the openings.

A roosting Seminole Bat in east Texas.

Michael Durham/Minden Pictures



Ready for sleep or ready to fly? An Eastern Red Bat hangs upside down.

Barry Mansell/Minden Pictures

iStockphoto.com/Jerome Whittingham

BAT HOUSES

Just because you prefer not to have bats inside your house and outbuildings doesn't mean you can't enjoy the benefits of having a colony or two around your home. Bat houses are artificial structures that can be constructed or purchased, and placed near gardens or other suitable areas. BCI states that homeowners, farmers, organic gardeners, foresters and recreation managers around the world are installing bat houses for education and pest reduction. Bat house plans or ready-made bat houses may be purchased at BCI's website, *www.BatCon.org*, or by calling 800-538-2287.

The Wisconsin DNR offers free bat house design and instruction at its website (*www.DNR.state.wi.us*), and plans and instruction also are available on the Minnesota DNR site, *www.MNDNR.org*, or write to: Minnesota DNR Nongame Wildlife Program, Box 25, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4007.

RIGHT: Taking flight, Fruit Bats begin their search for food.

Photo: iStockphoto.com/Joel Peters

BELOW: A Southern Long-nosed Bat feeds on nectar in the Chirlcahua Mountains in Arizona.

Photo: Barry Mansell/Minden Pictures

Attach the top and sides using tape, staples or Velcro. Leave the bottom open to allow the bats to crawl out, but they won't be able to get back in the structure. After the bats have migrated in the fall, you should permanently block access points by using hardware cloth, caulk, weather-stripping, insulation materials, steel wool or even duct tape.

If there is a maternity colony in the structure (mothers and young), you need to wait until late summer to apply the exclusion bird netting. This will allow time to guarantee that the young bats are able to fly. If the netting is put in place too early, the young will be trapped inside causing them to starve to death and eventually create odor problems. Again, waiting until the bats have migrated may be the best option before you seal access points.

If you decide that you don't feel comfortable removing bats yourself, most areas of the country have professionals willing to do the job for you. BCI has posted a list of reliable pest control operators on its website. Also, check with your local Department of Natural Resources and ask them if they keep lists of recommended pest control professionals.

In any case, don't let the bats living around your place drive you batty – they are fun to watch, perform a valuable summertime service and really prefer to stay out of the house.

Tim Nephew, a freelance writer living in Northern Minnesota, manages his 80 acres for wildlife, saving a few acres for another of his passions, growing cold-climate-hardy grapes.

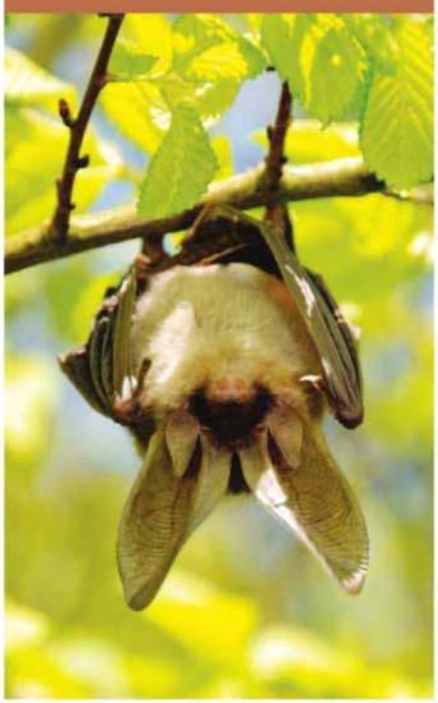
TO REPEL OR NOT TO REPEL

The Minnesota DNR lists a few suggestions that may be used to keep bats away before they pose a problem. The following suggestions may have limited success:

- **BRIGHT LIGHTS** placed in attics may disturb bats enough for them to leave, or it may just cause them to move to a more concealed area. Caution should be exercised to avoid electrical hazards caused by the amount of light necessary to disturb the bats.
- **ULTRASONIC DEVICES** are not considered effective in repelling bats, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources recommends that you be wary of any pest control company that recommends their use or the use of toxic chemicals. In Minnesota, no chemicals are currently registered for use on bats, and the use of chemicals may increase the risk of humans or pets coming into contact with sick or dying bats.
- **MOTHBALLS** (Naphthalene) – used as a repellent but requires large quantities that can create odor problems, which may be hazardous to humans.
- **DOG AND CAT REPELLENTS** – useful at temporary roost sites such as porches, carports and behind shutters. Effective for a couple of months, but never should be directly sprayed on bats.

INTERESTING BAT FACTS

- Bats are clean animals that groom themselves almost all the time.
- More than 1,000 species of bats are known.
- Most bats give birth to one "pup" each year, making them one of the slowest reproducing mammals on Earth based on their size.
- They help in pollination of crops and seed dispersal.
- Life span is 20 to 30 years.
- Little Brown Bats are one of the world's most long-lived mammals, with a life expectancy of up to 40 years.



A Brown Long-eared Bat slumbers in the sunlight.

Photo: iStockphoto.com/Barry Sutton

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Circle #28; see card pg 81

What's Next?

in the September/October issue of

GRIT

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Do-It-Yourself Swing

Spend some time relaxing in the summer breezes, with or without a porch!

By Steve Maxwell
Photographs by Mark Burstyn
Illustrations by Len Churchill

Lemonade and your own porch swing on a sunny summer day, priceless.

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE enjoying a summer breeze while sitting in an outdoor swing you've built yourself. This design features a swing and matching support stand that are beautiful and easy to build. Most of the parts use standard construction-grade softwood and cedar lumber.

Some tips before you start

Most joints in this project are glued and screwed together for strength and durability. But not all wood glue can last outdoors long term. The challenge is moisture, and that's why this project requires an adhesive that's specifically rated as weatherproof. Use wood glue carrying "type II" or "type III" water-resistance ratings, such as Gorilla wood glue.

This project includes a number of curved parts. For the best results, make full-size templates prior to cutting these items. One approach to templates involves enlarging the grid diagrams shown in illustrations on Page 78 on quarter-inch plywood or hardboard, then cutting out the shapes and using them for tracing templates on your lumber. Scale the patterns to size and temporarily glue the outlines onto your wood as a guide for your jigsaw. After cutting the pieces, peel off the paper, sand away any glue residue and you're ready to move on.

Start by studying the plans. Hidden components that must be especially strong are made of spruce or pine. More prominent parts are made of rot-resistant cedar.

Begin with the seat

The first step is to build four L-shaped assemblies that support the seat and back of the swing, each made from one back support and one seat support. The two supports for the middle of the seat are shorter than the outside seat supports (see building diagram on Page 77). Also, as you work, be sure to create two right-hand and two left-hand versions – carefully noting how the back supports overlap the seat supports. Use glue and four No. 10 2½-inch corrosion-resistant screws at each joint. The angled ends of these parts determine the angle of the back to the seat, and the recommended angle is included on the templates. A slight variation from the template would still work, but all four frames must be cut at the same angle.

You'll need to decide how to deal with screws. You can drive them in the ordinary way and leave them exposed, but covering screw heads with wooden plugs creates a much more refined appearance. For information on making and using your own tapered wooden plugs, see "A Special Touch" on Page 76.

Arrange all four L-shaped assemblies upright on your work surface and parallel with each other, just as they'll be in the finished project. There should be 16 inches between each

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back support member, totaling an overall length of 54 inches. Connect these parts using glue and No. 10 3-inch screws to fasten the back brace to the bottom back corners of all four L-shaped assemblies (lowest parts of the back supports and back ends of the seat supports). The bottom edge of the back brace should be flush with the bottom ends of the back supports. Also, the 16-inch spacing between each of the L-shaped assemblies is critical for a balanced look and proper support.

The front brace fastens to the front of the seat supports with glue and screws, but before you get this far you should do more than cut the front brace to length. It also requires a 10-degree bevel along the top edge, to match the angle where it will meet the front seat slat later. This might sound complicated, but it's not. If you have a table saw, simply tilt the blade 10 degrees from vertical as you cut the top edge of the front brace. You could achieve similar results using a hand plane. When it's time to secure the front brace with glue and screws, take another look at the plans. They show how this part fits between the two outside seat supports, tight to the front ends of the inside seat supports. A pipe clamp and extra hands make this work much easier.

To finish the main framework of the seat, secure the back top rail into the notches cut in the top ends of the back supports. Use glue and screws, as you did for the other joints.

Prepare the arms

Use glue and No. 10 3-inch-long screws to fasten the arm pieces. Cut both arm supports and fasten them to the outer faces of the outside seat supports 2½ inches back from their front ends. (The front of each arm extends 2½ inches ahead of the arm support.)

The swing requires reinforcement at the points where it is suspended from the support frame. The two arm brackets provide extra support for the front chains. Cut the brackets to size, round the bottom ends to a 2-inch radius and fasten them to the outside face of the arm supports, snuggly fitted against the underside of each arm. The back of the swing requires similar reinforcement with the two arm braces. Cut, shape and fasten (using No. 10 3-inch screws and glue) all the parts of the arm at this stage.

All of the cedar back slats and five of the seat slats are the same width (2¼ inches). Two seat slats are 3 inches wide. Attach one of the wide seat slats to the front of the seat support frame, using two No. 10 2-inch-long screws driven into pre-drilled holes at each end of the slat.

Secure the other wide seat slat 1½ inches ahead of the back supports. Space the remaining seat slats between these two, leaving a quarter-inch gap between them. Arrange them all without attaching them (so the spacing is right), then anchor the seat slats using one No. 10 2-inch screw at each end. This process works well for the back slats, too, but first place the seat on its back.

To complete the seat, add the decorative front top and base trim. If you have a table-mounted router, use a quarter-inch radius round-over bit to mill the exposed edges of these parts. You could also do a pretty good job with a hand plane. For best appearance, bevel the top edge of the front trim piece to match the 10-degree bevel you applied earlier to the front brace.

At this point, you can hang the swing from a porch, a big tree with a solid limb or an existing support frame. Otherwise you have a bit more building to do.

Create the support frame

Each of the four legs of the support frame is made of two parts (a face leg and a stiffener) joined together into an L-shaped profile. Use glue and No. 10 3-inch-long screws to join these parts.

Cut the ends of the legs after joining the parts into an L shape (but don't hit screws with the saw blade). The angles involved are important, and a compound miter saw is a big help in getting them right. The ends of

TOP TO BOTTOM: Curved cuts are based on the templates on Page 78. Carriage bolts are used to attach the support beam. Dock rings hold the chains to the support frame.

the legs need to be angled in two directions to form a stable frame.

You'll get perfect results if you set your saw to a miter angle of 8 degrees from square, and a bevel angle of 15 degrees from square. Trim each of the legs so it is 87 inches long, with end cuts parallel. The orientation of the legs as you cut the ends determines which way the legs face in the finished structure. Be certain to produce two left-hand and two right-hand legs.

After the legs are cut, lay opposite pairs of legs on a flat surface, with stiffeners facing down. Spread the bottom ends of the legs 60 inches apart, then cut and fit the top braces between the top ends of the legs. Use glue and No. 10 2-inch screws to anchor the top braces.

The two base pieces hold the legs the correct distance apart and provide solid footing for the support frame. Cut them to length with ends trimmed 15 degrees to match the angle of the leg frame. Fasten the base parts to the bottom ends of the legs, maintaining the 60-inch distance between them. The ends of the bases should extend 6 inches beyond the ends of each leg. You can add another board under each base piece. When these "sacrificial" boards rot, you can replace them easily.

Marine dock rings anchor the top ends of the support chains. Choose a design that includes a welded ring of steel set into a flat metal plate. Install the pull rings now, fastened to the inside faces of the top braces with bolts, not screws.

Attach all the remaining side braces next. You'll want to cut them to fit your particular swing. Start by measuring 3½ inches down from the bottom edge of the top brace, measure the distance between the legs, cut a pair of top side-braces to fit, and secure them with glue and screws. Work down each leg frame, ladder-style. The bottom brace should be 24 inches from the bottom of the legs.

The legs are connected across the top by a support beam made from parts that work together to create strength without too much weight. Cut the front and back beam members with ends angled 8 degrees. Connect these parts with the beam end members, then secure the narrow top caps to the top surface of the beam. Leave the wide top caps off for now.

It's time to join the leg frames and beam together, a job that goes much better with the help of extra hands. If you have a long pipe clamp, use it to hold together all the parts. The top edge of the beam needs to be flush with the top ends of the leg frames.

Drill holes for four 5/16-inch-by-5-inch-long carriage bolts through each top brace, stiffener and beam end. Use nuts and flat washers to secure each beam-to-leg frame joint. Finish up by installing both wide top caps so they overlap the outside faces of the frames by 1½ inches.

If you want to hide all screw heads under tapered wooden plugs, do that at this point.

As for finishing the wood, there are several good options – and a few bad ones. Exterior-grade penetrating oil offers one excellent approach. It's easy to apply and never peels. Simply reapply oil whenever the wood begins to look dry. You could also leave the wood to weather naturally.

You'd be wise to avoid any finish that forms a surface film. These invariably peel in time, and it would be difficult to scrape and strip the failing finish from the nooks and crannies in this swing and stand.

If the stand will be in one place for a season or more, you can easily train a vine to use it as a trellis. The additional shade (and possibly the fragrance of flowers) will make your time of relaxation all the more enjoyable.

One more important thing: Suspend the swing from chains with 3/16-inch-diameter eyebolts. Now it's time to settle in and swing!

Steve Maxwell has been a hard-core do-it-yourselfer, builder and writer for more than 20 years.

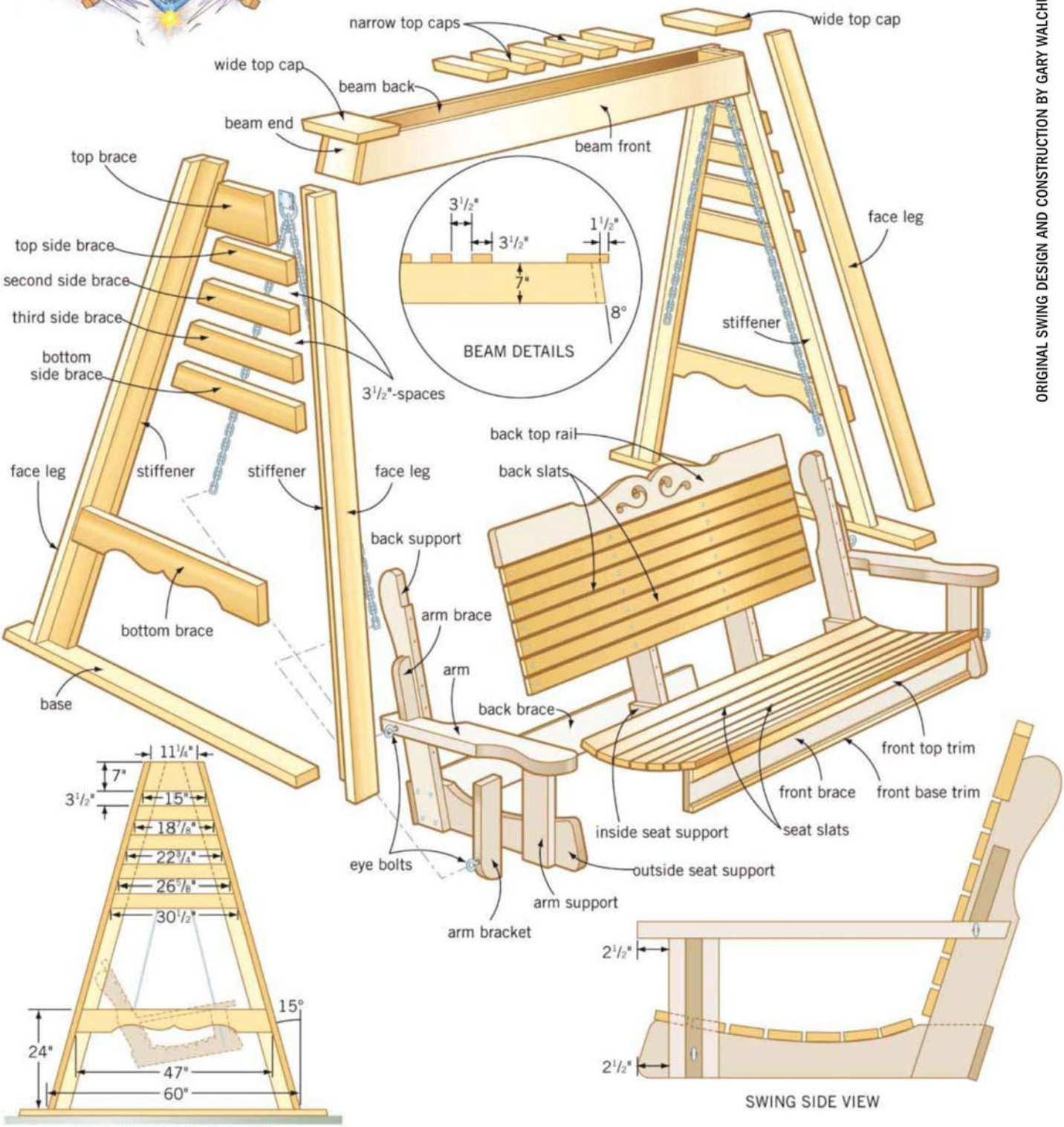
Steve Maxwell

A SPECIAL TOUCH

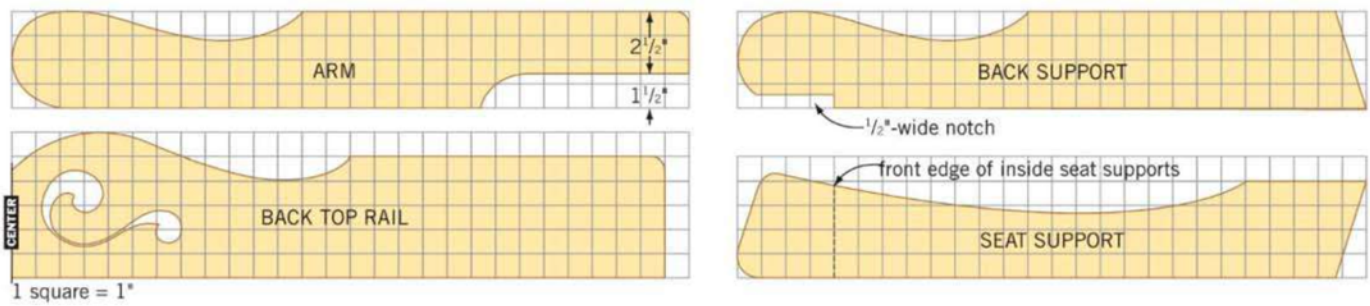
It's amazing how much nicer projects look when you take the time and effort to hide screw heads beneath tapered wooden plugs that you cut yourself. The best approach begins by drilling a ½-inch-diameter hole that's ½-inch deep. Drive the screws into these holes as you're working. Keep in mind that you need to use slightly shorter screws with this method or the tips of the screws will punch out the other side of the wood.

Use a tapered plug cutter in a drill press to produce wooden plugs from project scraps. Pry the plugs out with a screwdriver or small chisel. Apply a tiny bit of glue to the plugs as you tap them into place. You'll get the best results if you orient the wood grain of the plugs so it's parallel to the surrounding grain. Later, when the glue has dried, sand the plugs flush and the piece will be ready for finishing.

ORIGINAL SWING DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION BY GARY WALCHUK



PART	MATERIAL	SIZE	QUANTITY
Outside seat supports	spruce	1½-by-4½-by-26-inch	2
Inside seat supports	spruce	1½-by-4-by-22-inch	2
Back supports	spruce	1½-by-4-by-26-inch	4
Back brace	spruce	¾-by-4¼-by-54-inch	1
Front brace	spruce	1½-by-4-by-48-inch	1
Back top rail	spruce	1½-by-6-by-54-inch	1
Wide seat slats	cedar	1-by-3-by-51-inch	2
Narrow seat slats	cedar	1-by-2¼-by-51-inch	5
Back slats	cedar	1-by-2¼-by-54-inch	7
Arm supports	spruce	1½-by-4½-by-10-inch	2
Arm brackets	spruce	1½-by-2-by-10-inch	2
Arms	spruce	1½-by-4-by-28-inch	2
Arm brace	spruce	1½-by-2½-by-6-inch	2
Front top trim	cedar	½-by-1½-by-48-inch	1
Front base trim	cedar	½-by-1-by-48-inch	1
Screw eyes		5/16-inch diameter-by-4-inch long	4
Chain		3/16-inch, 19 feet of grade 30	1
Chain repair links		3/16-inch, thread type	8
SUPPORT FRAME			
Face legs	cedar	1½-by-3½-by-87-inch	4
Stiffeners	cedar	1½-by-3½-by-87-inch	4
Top braces	spruce	1½-by-7-by-15-inch	2
Bases	cedar	1½-by-3½-by-72-inch	2
Bottom braces	cedar	1½-by-5½-by-47-inch	2
Side braces	cedar	1½-by-3½-by-18⅞-inch	2
	cedar	1½-by-3½-by-22¾-inch	2
	cedar	1½-by-3½-by-26⅝-inch	2
	cedar	½-by-3½-by-30½-inch	2
Dock rings	plated steel	2½-inch dia. plus mounting plate	2
Carriage bolts	galvanized, plus nuts/washers	5/16-by-5-inch	8
SUPPORT BEAM			
Beam front and back	cedar	1½-by-7-by-72-inch	2
Beam ends	spruce	1½-by-7-by-11½-inch	2
Wide top caps	cedar	1½-by-7-by-18½-inch	2
Narrow top caps	cedar	1½-by-3½-by-18½-inch	5



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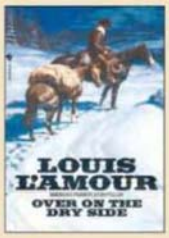

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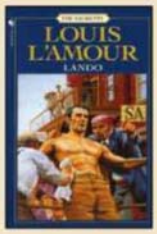

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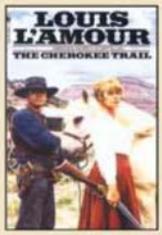

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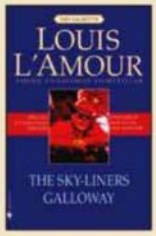

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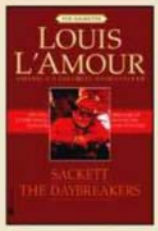

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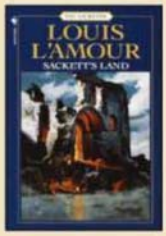

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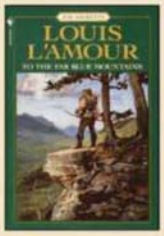

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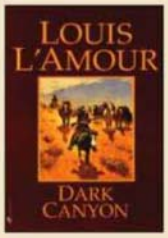

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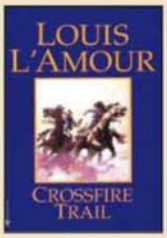

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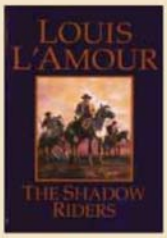

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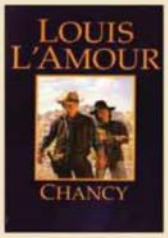

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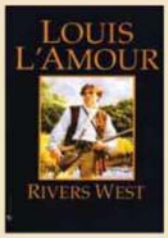

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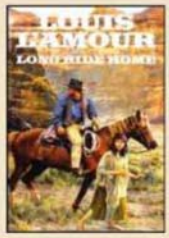

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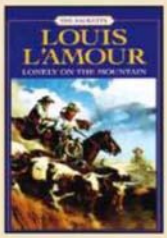

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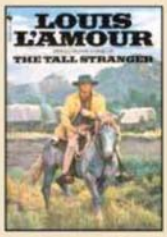

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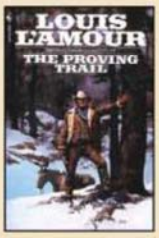

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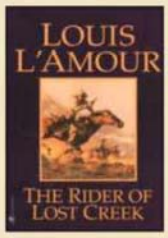

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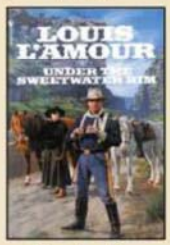

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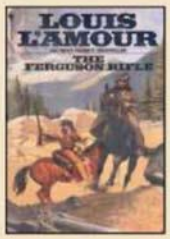

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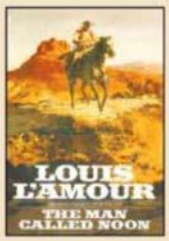

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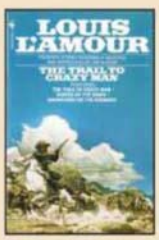

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Horses, cattle and donkeys can help around the homestead.

Hardiness and willingness make Randall Lineback cattle attractive draft animals.

The Dales Pony was the pack animal of choice for the British lead-mining industry.

By Jennifer Kendall

Photographs courtesy American Livestock Breeds Conservancy

Before there were tractors, trucks and tillers, our ancestors used domesticated livestock breeds to plow fields, dig ditches, haul logs and accomplish tasks that couldn't be done with human strength alone. Horses, cattle and donkeys were reputable as "beasts of burden," using their strength and resolve to earn their keep on early American farms.

Today, as ever-larger and more powerful machines influence agriculture, many once-popular laboring animals are faced with extinction. Breed names have been replaced with brand names. While the Suffolk Punch, Randall Lineback or Dexter will never compete with John Deere, these animals still have a place on small operations, and their interesting histories and important genetics make them fun to raise, and hopefully will secure their futures. Meet some of the prototypes for modern-day machines.

ABOVE: The Suffolk Punch is the only draft horse breed developed exclusively for farm work.

RIGHT: A small cattle breed, Dexters are multipurpose animals.

Suffolk Horse

Status: Critical

The Suffolk horse, commonly called the Suffolk Punch, packs a "big punch." As the only draft horse breed developed exclusively for farm work, the Suffolk earned the "Punch" nickname because of its solid appearance and brute strength. The breed originated in England and was first imported to the United States in the 1880s.

As a result of the breed's sole selection for agricultural work, the Suffolk has developed stamina, hardiness, a willing disposition and easy-keeping qualities, all of which make it an ideal workhorse. All Suffolks are a rich chestnut color, standing 16 to 17 hands at the withers and averaging 1,800 pounds. The Suffolk's moderate size compared to that of other draft breeds has been an asset in its promotion to those who continue to farm with horses. Today, there are about 800 Suffolk horses in the United States and about 200 in England, making it a critical conservation priority.

Dexter Cattle

Status: Recovering

The Dexter is one of the smallest cattle breeds in the world, but don't let its size fool you.

The Dexter is a useful and productive multipurpose animal that can make a great ox or draft animal. Standing at only 40 inches tall and weighing 700 to 900 pounds, the Dexter's size is its most distinguishing characteristic. The Dexter has Irish roots that can be traced back to smallholders in Ireland in the 1880s who appreciated the Dexter for its efficiency in producing milk and beef on limited acreage and for its use as a draft animal. Dexters were imported to North America beginning in 1910.

Dexter cattle are solid and compact in appearance. Most Dexters are black, although red and dun are also found. They are hardy, forage-efficient cattle with excellent maternal qualities. Many people prefer keeping Dexters because they need fewer "groceries" when compared with some of the larger draft breeds, and their smaller size equates to smaller yokes, which are easier to lift and carry. Dexter cattle numbers are increasing in North America and globally, and with continued support from stewards, the breed will continue to grow.

Randall Lineback Cattle

Status: Critical

You might think the Randall Lineback gets its "lineback" name from its size and strength, but "lineback" actually refers to the breed's blue-black color pattern with white lines down the back. While you won't find these guys on the football field, for hundreds of years they served as beasts of burden and tillers of soil in the New England area. In fact, they are the last purebred of the New England landrace cattle.

Randall Linebacks are medium sized and are known for sound legs and sure feet. Randalls are a naturally hardy breed with good resistance to disease and parasites. They make excellent, attentive mothers. Their unusual color, willingness and ability make them attractive and capable draft animals. Randall Lineback cattle are critically rare, with fewer than 250 animals distributed among a few herds. The breed is more secure now than in the recent past, but its survival remains tenuous.

WWW.GRIT.COM More beasts of burden and other heritage breeds on the ALBC watch lists.

Miniature Donkey
Status: Recovering

Miniature Donkeys have been valued in the Mediterranean region for more than 2,000 years. Donkey milk was utilized as a curative and skin treatment. It was said that Roman Empress Poppaea, Nero's wife, kept a herd of jennets to produce milk for her baths. Aside from being sources of milk, Miniature Donkeys were valued as a means of draft and transport, as well as for the power to grind wheat. They served a central role in Mediterranean culture and were imported to the United States in 1929.

Miniature Donkeys have curious, engaging dispositions. Donkeys average 34 inches high at the withers and weigh 200 to 350 pounds. Gray is the most common color, though black, brown, sorrel, white and spotted animals also occur. At maturity (3 years), they are able to pull a cart or carry a pack. The breed's thrifty nature, long life span and easy keeping qualities reflect its past as a sturdy work animal. Today, there are 10,000 to 15,000 Miniature Donkeys in North America; however, the breed is disappearing in its native land as it is being crossed with larger breeds. For this reason, the Miniature Donkeys in North America are of global genetic value and need continued stewardship.

Dales Pony
Status: Threatened

The Dales Pony originated in northern England where it was used as a pack animal for the lead-mining industry. This hardy pony carried loads of lead ore down to the coast from the mines and returned carrying coal, traveling 200 miles per week over rocky, rugged terrain. During the world wars, the Dales Pony was drafted into the British military to carry armaments. Many Dales were killed in the wars, and by 1955, only four fillies were registered. Breed enthusiasts recognized the crisis and made concerted efforts to locate unregistered stock and save the breed. By 1971, the breed had stepped back from the brink of extinction, and, in 1994, the first animals were imported to the United States.

Today, the Dales Pony is valued for its stamina and is often used as an endurance mount or in combined driving events. The Dales Pony may stand up to 14.2 hands at the withers. It has a strong, compact build and is known for its hard, large feet and strong legs. Coat color is predominantly black, but some animals are brown, gray, bay and rarely roan. The Dales is known and valued for its courage, intelligence, thriftiness and calm temperament. Today, the breed is listed as Threatened on the ALBC Conservation Priority List.

Miniature Donkeys were valued as draft and transportation animals in the Mediterranean for centuries.

Carolina born and bred, Jennifer Kendall resides in Raleigh, North Carolina, with her husband, Basset Hound and Orange Tabby, and dreams of one day owning some of these heritage breeds.

ABOUT ALBC

The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy is a nonprofit membership organization working to protect more than 170 breeds of livestock and poultry from extinction. Founded in 1977, ALBC is the pioneer organization in the United States working to conserve historic breeds and genetic diversity in livestock. ALBC's mission is to ensure the future of agriculture through genetic conservation and the promotion of endangered breeds of livestock and poultry.

Membership in the organization is $30 per year. For more information or to join, call 919-542-5704 or visit the website *www.ALBC-USA.org.*

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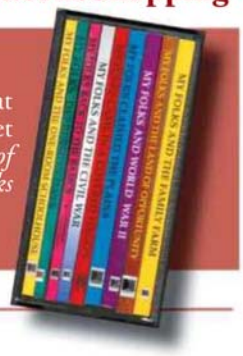

Hitch up your armchair and travel back in time. Here are authentic tales as precious as tangible heirlooms that have been handed down from generation to generation within families of readers of CAPPER'S and GRIT. The set is comprised of 10 books: *My Folks and the Family Farm, My Folks Claimed the Plains, My Folks and the Land of Opportunity, My Folks and World War II, My Folks Came in a Covered Wagon, My Folks and the Civil War, My Folks Back to Basics, My Folks Depression Days, My Folks and the One-room Schoolhouse and My Folks Rode the Rails.*
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GREEN RESTORATIONS
This book is written in such a way that it is accessible for homeowners but technical enough for contractors, it will appeal to anyone trying to green an older home while preserving its historic and cultural significance. Presented in a readily accessible room-by-room and system-by-system layout, this format covers rehabilitation and remodeling questions applicable to old homes.
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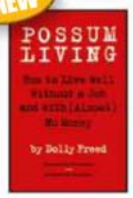

POSSUM LIVING
This book discusses reasons why you should or shouldn't give up your job, and gives you details about the cheapest ways with the best results to buy and maintain your home, dress well, cope with the law, stay healthy and keep up a middle-class facade — whether you live in the city, in the suburbs or in a small town.
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NEW

THE FARMSTEAD CREAMERY ADVISOR
Respected cheesemaker, instructor, and speaker Gianaclis Caldwell walks would-be producers through the many, and often confusing, steps and decisions they will face when considering a career in this burgeoning cottage industry. This book fills the gap that exists between the pasture and cheese plate. It goes far beyond issues of caring for livestock and basic cheesemaking, explaining business issues.
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THE SELF SUFFICIENT-ISH BIBLE
If you don't have the space or time to be totally self-sufficient, but want to know how to live a more environmentally friendly life, then this is the book for you. The authors offer a positive and fun approach, accepting that adjusting every aspect of our lives is too overwhelming for many of us.
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Build the simplest oven in a day! With a bit more time and imagination, you can make a permanent foundation and a fire-breathing-dragon oven or any other shape that you can dream up. Kiko Denzer's book also includes directions on how to tend the fire and how to make sourdough hearth loaves in the artisan tradition.
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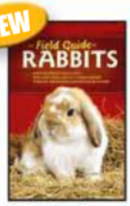

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This book will help guide you through the maze of rabbits and arm you with information on all of the 47 breeds recognized by the American Rabbit Breeders Association, as well as provide you with information on their shapes, sizes, colors, fur varieties and more. In addition, there is a basic history of rabbits and insights on bunny behavior.
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Completely revised and updated, the fourth edition of this classic guide covers everything you need to know about raising rabbits, including breed selection, year-round care and feeding, safe housing, humane handling and disease prevention and treatment. New and expanded features include guidelines for showing, updated breed guide photographs and expert advice on marketing.
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THE FIELD GUIDE TO CHICKENS
This convenient, easy-to-use guide puts a wealth of information into your hands. It includes eye-catching color photographs of every breed, from utilitarian egg layers to exotic show birds, as well as brief histories and a list of characteristics for 61 chicken breeds.
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STOREY'S ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO POULTRY BREEDS
This definitive guide to North American barnyard and wild fowl includes a brief history of each breed, detailed descriptions of identifying characteristics, and colorful photography that celebrates the birds' quirky personalities and charming good looks. More than 128 birds strut their stuff across the pages of this ultimate primer for farmers and fanciers alike.
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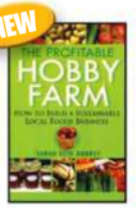

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You'll get plain-English advice from a self-proclaimed farm-girl-turned-entrepreneur on trends in niche agriculture and local foods, creating a business plan for a small-scale or hobby venture, assessing your home marketplace and uncovering niches not yet served, financing options, especially grants and cost-sharing programs, free or low-cost marketing ideas, basic strategies for surviving the first year in business and more!
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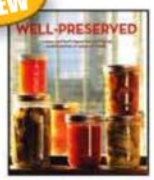

WELL-PRESERVED
This is a collection of 30 small-batch preserving recipes and 90 recipes in which to use the preserved goods. The author clearly describes the art of preserving in an accessible way. Though she covers traditional water bath and pressure canning, she also shares simpler methods that allow you to preserve foods using low-tech options like oil-preserving, curing and freezing.
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BACK TO BASICS: TRADITIONAL KITCHEN WISDOM
This book shows you how you can enjoy the rewards of being more self-reliant by growing your own fruits and vegetables in a space, turning fresh fruit into jams and jellies, learning safe canning and freezing methods, drying foods and creating your own herbs and spices, raising chickens and honeybees, making your own cheese and more.
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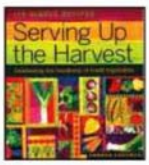

SERVING UP THE HARVEST
No matter where you find your vegetables, their fresh-from-the-earth goodness demands inspired preparation. Andrea Chesman shares more than 175 recipes designed to bring out the very best in whatever produce is peaking now. From spring's first Peas and New Potato Salad to autumn's sweet Caramelized Winter Squash and Onion Pizza, serving up the harvest has never been so delicious!
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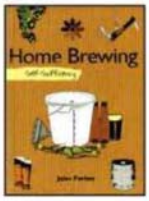

HOME BREWING
Those new to home brewing will love the easy-to-follow instructions and the detailed explanations of the brewing process, and adept home brewers will be delighted with the wide selection of recipes. Made with natural ingredients, the brewing methods and beer recipes featured here will appeal to anyone seeking a more wholesome, self-sufficient lifestyle.
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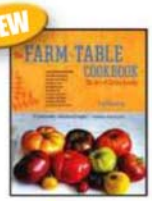

THE FARM TO TABLE COOKBOOK (Paperback Edition)
Personal chef, cooking teacher, farmer's market aficionado and author, Ivy Manning, has culled from her own culinary repertoire to offer up this collection of recipes. Unconventional crops color the stands at local markets and this cookbook invites the home cook to sample, explore and experiment with the freshest ingredients that local cuisine has to offer.
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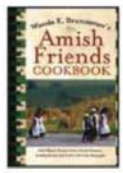

WANDA E. BRUNSTETTER'S AMISH FRIENDS COOKBOOK
This book is a treasure trove of recipes and interesting facts from the heart of Amish country. Recipes are divided into sections including breads and rolls, desserts, main dishes, sides, jams, jellies and more! You'll find only the best of home cooking between the pages of this delightful book.
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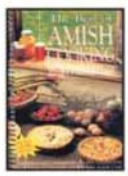

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This 215-page book by a leading expert on Amish cooking highlights traditional and contemporary recipes adapted from the kitchens and pantries of Amish cooks. Delicious and savory recipes fill this book with some of the best food you'll find anywhere.
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TOMATO: A FRESH-FROM-THE-VINE COOKBOOK
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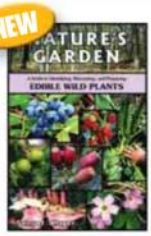

NATURE'S GARDEN: EDIBLE WILD PLANTS
This book includes chapters covering 41 wild edibles. In this volume you will find the most authoritative accounts of several important food plants, such as hackberry and American lotus, available anywhere. You will find mouth-watering photography of cranberries, blueberries, huckleberries, strawberries, wild plums and more. You'll hear of new methods for using dandelions and so much more!
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THE VEGETABLE GARDENER'S BOOK OF BUILDING PROJECTS
Make your food garden more productive and more enjoyable! These 39 simple-to-make projects — including cold frames, compost bins, planters, raised beds, potting benches, gates, trellises, storage containers, outdoor furniture and more — will increase your harvest, make your garden chores easier and turn your garden and yard into an appealing outdoor space for relaxing and enjoying the fruits of your labors.
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GARDEN WISDOM AND KNOW-HOW
This is a complete home reference for everything you need to know about gardening — from soil and fertilizers to growing flowers and vegetables. Readers will discover tips and techniques for maintaining a garden year-round; harvesting herbs; designing by bloom season; turning garden refuse into garden rewards; building teepees, trellises and other plant supports; and much more.
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THE COMPLETE COMPOST GARDENING GUIDE
Barbara Pleasant's bountiful, compost-rich gardens require less digging, weeding, mulching and even less planting. And here's one of the best parts — no more backbreaking slogs from compost bin to garden. The authors even identify the plants that benefit most from compost and how the elements of a composted garden work together.
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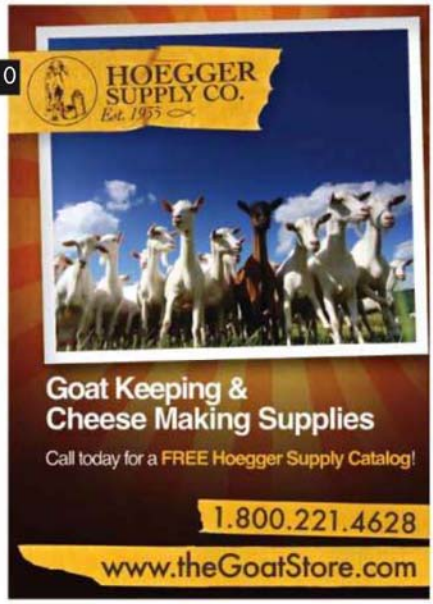

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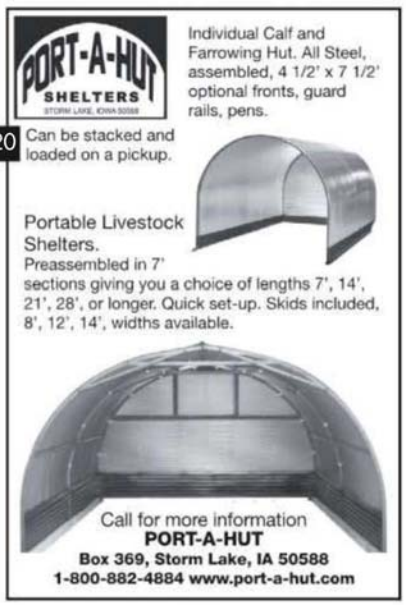

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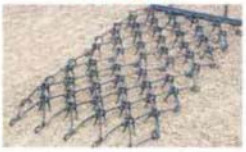

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There Is No Such Thing As Holistic Ingredients. Solid Gold is the Source of Longevity and Focuses on Prevention.

In 1975, Solid Gold introduced the first natural dog food into the U.S. Then, other companies tried to copy us. Our dog food was named Hund-N-Flocken after its German name, after having been a top seller in Germany for 20 years.

In 1985, Solid Gold introduced the first holistic dog food into the U.S. Holistic does not mean natural. It does not mean organic – no matter what other ignorant dog food companies tell you. It means the whole body works together – mind, body and spirit. Holistic is a philosophy of life.

Example: All the Oriental dogs, dogs from Ireland, Scotland (terriers, spaniels, retrievers, mastiffs), and water dogs, like labs and poodles, were fed a fish – based dog food and sea vegetation such as our Solid Gold Sea Meal for hundreds of years. If you don't feed them a fish-based dog food and Sea Meal, they will chew at the root of the tail and lick their feet. Fish supports the DNA so you don't get allergies. All of the Solid Gold dog foods and cat foods (Katz-N-Flocken and Indigo Moon Holistic Cat food) are fish-based.

White dogs or dogs with white on them, also need a fish-based dog food. Think of the animals in the arctic. The polar bear is white, the American Eskimo dog, and the Samoyed dogs are white. The Siberian husky has a white undercoat and frequently has blue eyes. This permits the ultra-violet light to enter the body and boost up the hormone, enzyme and immune systems. See Tolkien's book, "Lord of the Rings" for further details on the importance of ultra-violet light. This is part of why the Solid Gold Sea Meal must be fed twice a day. It has 60 trace minerals from sea algae. Dogs are 11% trace minerals, but only 4% vitamins. Without trace minerals, the vitamins don't work. See previous article on why we don't use Norwegian kelp and radiation from the explosion from the Chernobyl Russian plant.

Back to the white coat – if too much blue light enters the body, it destroys the immune system. In Florida and southern California, keep white dogs inside between 10 am – 4 pm to prevent photo-aging and tear stains. Other types of dogs have "holistic" considerations. The Coton-de-Tuler was originally from the island of Madagascar near South Africa. The Havanese was originally from the island of Cuba. The Bichon Frise was developed around the coast of France. The Maltese was developed on the island of Malta.

You must feed these dogs a fish-based dog food and Sea Meal. Our "Just a Wee Bit" dry dog food has small pieces for the little mouth. It is 28% protein, small dogs need a high protein diet their whole lives because small dogs have a high metabolism. The pink bag has a Westhighland White Terrier on the front. My grandmother's Westie wasn't a terrier. She was a terrorist and always got her own way. Other arctic dogs like the Pom, need fish. The Pom was originally a sled dog. You can tell by the tail.

Recently, at a dog show, some other dog food company was next to our booth. They proudly announced that they were now holistic too. We asked them what holistic meant. They replied that they put apples in their food. They said this made the food holistic.
You can add any cooked vegetables such as broccoli, carrots and green beans – but never peas. Peas cause gas in dogs. Dr. Karen Halligan, DVM warns never to give avocados to dogs. It may cause pancreatitis problems.

Our food bags are hermetically sealed, like vacuumed packed. So, we don't use any artificial preservatives. Never empty the bag into another container. The act of pouring exposes the food to air. Just open the top, scoop out and then seal with clothes pins or bag clips. This way, only the top layers are exposed to the air.

Solid Gold sources its food in the U.S. and has it manufactured here. Two years ago 197 brands of dog food were made in China and killed 6000-7000 dogs and cats. Only about five dog foods are sourced and made in the U.S. Solid Gold is one of them.
Solid Gold answers to a Higher Power!

Now for you cute story

One afternoon, a lady heard a scratching at her door. She opened it to find an old dog that walked right in. He was well fed and seemed friendly. He walked through the living room, curled up in a corner and went to sleep. Later on, he scratched the door to be let out and disappeared. This routine went on for several days. Finally, the lady attached a note to his collar as he was leaving.
The next day, a new note was on his collar. It read, "We have six very active children in our home. I guess the dog just need a place to rest. Tomorrow, can I come to your house too?"

Solid Gold is the only dog food company that is a member of the Organic Trade Association, the American Nutraceutical Association, the Medicinal Food Association, Nutraceutical Foods Association and the Life Extension Association.

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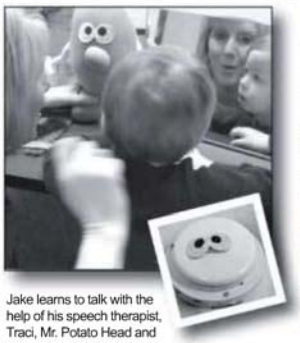

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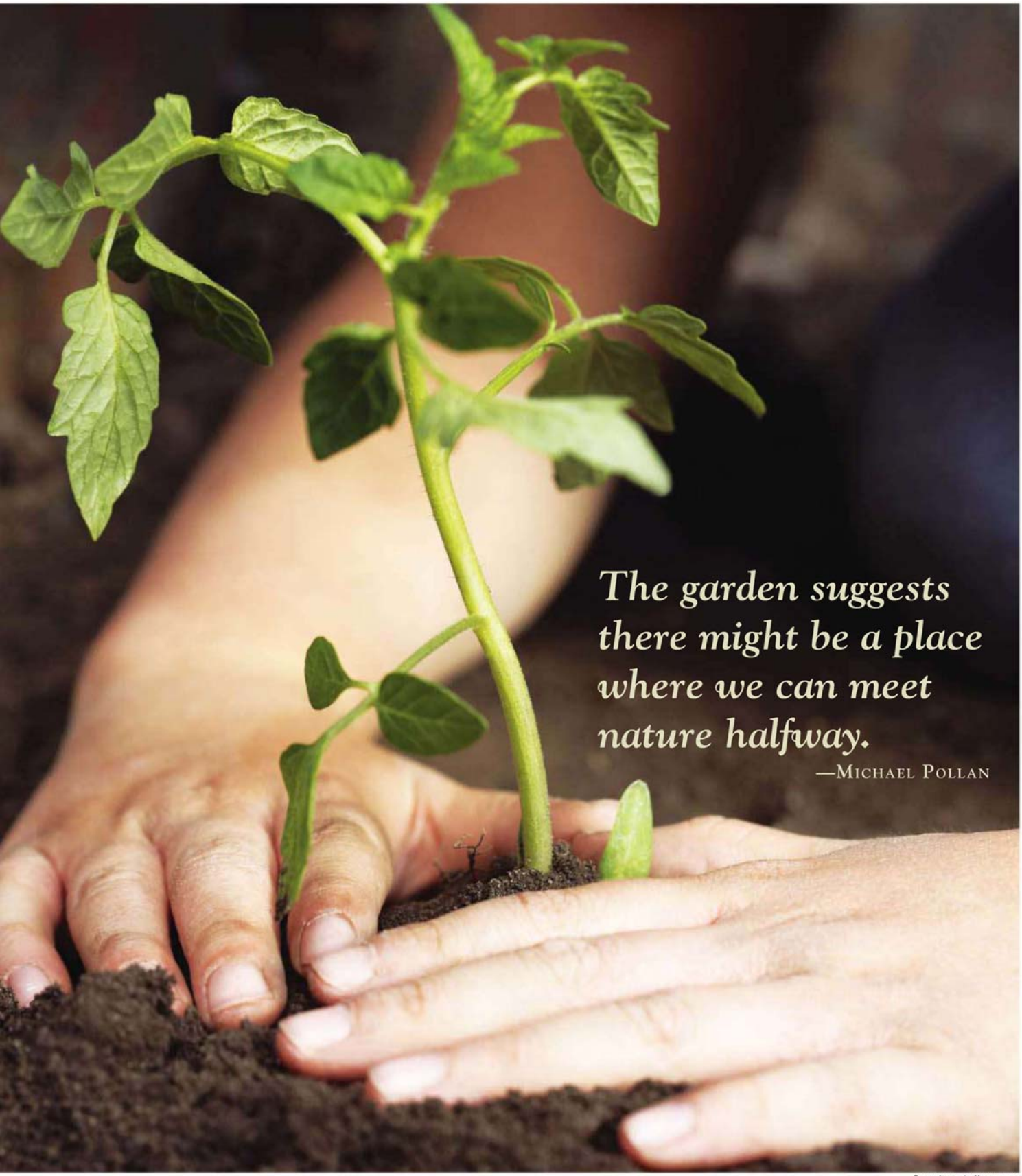

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